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Continuity and Change in the Concept of Freedom through Three Generations of the Modern Arab Renaissance (*Nahda*)

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Continuity and Change in the Concept of Freedom through Three Generations of the Modern Arab Renaissance (*Nahda*)

by

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Dedication

To my parents, Andrew and Karen, and my wife Heidi

Abstract

Continuity and Change in the Concept of Freedom through Three Generations of the Modern Arab Renaissance (*Nahda*)

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This thesis traces the development of the concept of freedom through three generations of the Modern Arab Renaissance (*Nahda)*. The first chapter challenges the claim that the concept of freedom, in the sense of a political right, was absent from Arab thought prior to the French occupation of Egypt (1798-1801). 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti's (1754-1825/6) chronicle of the occupation reveals that he possessed the concept of freedom despite the lack of an Arabic word to identify it. Therefore, when Rifa'a Rafi' al-Tahtawi (1801-73) translated the French term *liberté* into Arabic, through a semantic expansion of the word *hurriyah*, he was naming rather than introducing the concept. The second chapter turns to Syria and examines how Butrus al-Bustani's (1819-83) advocacy of the freedom of conscience (*hurriyat al-damir*) as an individual right reflects the influence of his American missionary mentors. However, while the missionaries used this concept to defend their narrow sectarian interests, Bustani believed that the freedom of all citizens must be protected equally by a secular government. The

third chapter follows two Syrian friends, Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865-1935) and Farah Antun (1874-1922), who migrated to Egypt where their differing visions of reform brought them into conflict on the pages of their respective literary journals. While Antun argued that secularism provides the best guarantee of freedom, Rida contended that true freedom is only found in Islam. Despite this divide, they shared the same fundamental understanding of the value and meaning of freedom. This chapter shows that the concept of freedom is compatible with differing political ideologies while maintaining its core semantic field. Although there were some changes in how Arab intellectuals conceived of freedom during the nineteenth century, this study demonstrates that there was considerable continuity.

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Introduction

> *To some extent I may have distorted the thought of the writers I studied, at least those of the first and second generations: the 'modern' element in their thought may have been smaller than I implied, and it would have been possible to write about them in a way which emphasized continuity rather than a break with the past.*[1]

Albert Hourani wrote the above self-criticism in the preface to the 1983 reissue of his seminal work, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939*, which traces the responses of several generations of Arab writers to the 'modern' and 'liberal' ideas of Europe that accompanied the expansion of European influence in the region. The explicit connection that Hourani makes between liberalism and Europe is evident in the title of the book, which identifies the dawn of the 'liberal age' in the Middle East as 1798, the year in which Napoleon Bonaparte and accompanying contingents of French soldiers and scholars landed on the shores of Egypt and began a three year occupation of that country. Hourani is not alone in this regard as many Western and Arab historians identify the French occupation of Egypt as the beginning of the modern era in the history of the Middle East. He is also not alone in identifying the increase in Western influence that characterized this period with the introduction of modernity and liberalism to the region.

Without a doubt the increased presence of Westerners in Arab lands – as soldiers, diplomats, merchants, or missionaries – resulted in a greater exposure of Arab intellectuals to Western ideas. There was also an influx of Arab travelers to European countries sent by reforming rulers such as Muhammad Ali who were intent on learning

[1] Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), preface.

the secrets of the European powers' strength. At the request of Arab rulers or of their own initiative, Arab writers sought to introduce European ideas to the Arabic reading public through the translation of books covering a wide array of topics. The translation of European works required the introduction of new writing styles, genres, and vocabulary to the Arabic language. This was one component of a larger cultural movement during the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries to renew the Arabic language and literature, which many Arab intellectuals believed was incapable of expressing modern ideas in a clear and concise way. This movement was identified by the Syrian journalist, Jurji Zaydan (1861-1914), as the *Nahda*, or the modern Arab renaissance, and he specifically associated the process of modernization with the beneficial contributions of the West to the East, beginning with Bonaparte's invasion of Egypt.[2]

While recognizing that the rise of European influence in the Ottoman provinces was indeed an impetus for social, political, and cultural reform, this study will challenge the all too common narrative repeated by both Western and Arab historians that overstates the introduction of modernity and liberalism to the Arab East by Westerners. In order to challenge this narrative, this study will closely examine the history of one particular concept that is perhaps the most closely associated with political modernity, the concept of freedom, or liberty.[3] In particular, it will seek to answer the following questions: Did Arab scholars at the beginning of the nineteenth century perceive the concept of freedom, as they encountered it in European works, to be novel or

[2] *Encyclopedia of Islam, 2nd Edition*, s.v. "Nahda" by N. Tomiche.
[3] The concept of freedom and the concept of liberty will be used interchangeably in this study.

incomprehensible in any way? To what degree were Arab writers influenced by European conceptions of freedom? Do those who embrace the concept of freedom as a political value tend to adopt any particular political ideology or understanding of the relationship between the individual, society, and government?

In seeking to answer these questions, my research will be informed by the German methodology of conceptual history, *Begriffsgeschichte*. This methodology has its roots in a project led by scholars Reinhart Koselleck, Otto Brunner, and Werner Conze, who attempted to trace the invention and development of the fundamental concepts (*Begriffe*) that underpin and inform history (*Geschicht*).[4] This project produced several massive series, published from the 1970s and into the 1990s, that meticulously documented the development of social and political concepts in the German language. Obviously, this master's thesis can in no way replicate the sort of exhaustive research conducted by these teams of scholars, but it will attempt to employ the same methodologies and theoretical presuppositions. One of the main advantages of this school of conceptual history is that, unlike historical philology and lexicography, it does not require concepts to be identified with any single word. Instead, concepts are identified by their semantic field, which includes a range of "characteristic synonyms, antonyms, associated terms, forming a more or less unified part of a vocabulary at a given time."[5] In fact, with this approach, it is possible for someone to possess a concept without possessing any particular word to express it, as the following example illustrates:

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[4] Hayden White, foreword to *The Practice of Conceptual History*, by Reinhart Koselleck (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), ix.

[5] Hampsher-Monk, Iain, Tilmans, Karin, and Van Vree, Frank (editors), *History of Concepts: Comparative Perspectives* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998) 81.

> It is, for instance, clear that Milton knew about, and valued, 'originality', otherwise he would not have thought it important to try to do 'things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme'. But although Milton quite clearly possessed the *concept* of originality, he had no word with which to express it, for 'originality' did not enter the English language until a century after his death.[6]

The theoretical distinction between words and concepts is particularly important to my arguments in the first chapter of this thesis, in which I evaluate the claim that the concept of freedom was introduced to Egypt by Napoleon Bonaparte's forces during their occupation of Egypt from 1798-1801. Those who make this claim often cite the histories of the occupation written by 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti (1754-1825/6) as evidence that this religious scholar neither possessed the concept of freedom nor comprehended the concept as it was used by the French. However, I will argue that while Jabarti did not possess a single word to express the concept of freedom, and political freedom in particular, he did possess this concept and used it to criticize the French occupation and the loss of freedom that it entailed for Egyptians. Another Egyptian religious scholar, Rifa'a Rafi' al-Tahtawi (1801-73), is often credited with being the first Arab intellectual to clearly grasp and articulate the concept of freedom. Yet I will show that Tahtawi's accomplishment was merely to expand the meaning of the classical Arabic word, *hurriyah*, and use it to identify the concept of freedom that already existed in Arabic thought.

Another important theoretical presupposition of the German school of conceptual history is that a new term may be coined; however it can never be so new that "it was not

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[6] Ibid, 2.

already virtually contained in the respective existing language."[7] This further supports the argument that while Tahtawi gave a new meaning to the word *hurriyah*, this meaning already existed in Arabic thought and thus it does not reflect the adoption of a foreign concept. In the second chapter, we will explore the coining of another term, *hurriyat al-damir*, by the Syrian scholar, Butrus al-Bustani (1819-83). Bustani coined *hurriyat al-damir* as a translation of the English 'freedom of conscience,' which was used frequently by American missionaries in Syria to defend the rights of individuals to convert to Protestantism. Bustani was one of the first Syrian converts to Protestantism and his advocacy of the freedom of conscience reflects the influence of the missionaries, with whom he worked closely for many years. Yet at the same time he was building upon the work of Tahtawi to expand the meaning of *hurriyah*. In addition, it would be completely inaccurate to argue, as some have done, that Bustani and other Syrian intellectuals learned the principles of liberalism from Western missionaries and their educational institutions. In fact, Bustani repudiated the missionaries' pursuit of their narrow, sectarian interests and instead articulated a much more liberal vision of society in which the freedom of all citizens would be protected.

A third presupposition that I will employ in this study is that conceptual history cannot be extricated from social history because concepts are the tools of social interaction and conflict. This is especially true of political concepts, such as freedom, the definition of which is central to most political arguments. Therefore, in order to understand the development of freedom as a concept it is important to ask who used the

[7] Ibid. p.31.

concept and to study the political conflicts they were involved in.[8] The third chapter of this thesis will study how the concept of freedom was used by two Syrian intellectuals, Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865-1935) and Farah Antun (1874-1922). Although Rida and Antun shared much in common – they were both originally from Tripoli but travelled together to Egypt where they both started literary journals – they had two very different political visions. While Antun argued that secular government is the best guarantee of freedom, Rida asserted that true freedom is found in the proper implementation of Islamic law. However, this chapter will show that despite the ways that Rida and Antun both adapted the concept of freedom to fit their different political arguments, their understanding of freedom was informed by the same semantic range that associated freedom with tolerance and equality. In addition, they both believed that freedom must be limited to a degree in order to preserve the unity of a community. Ultimately, these two cases demonstrate both the stability and the flexibility of the concept of freedom.

[8] Ibid. p.82.

Chapter I

'Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti and Rifa'a Rafi' al-Tahtawi:

Naming the Concept of Freedom

> *That which they call freedom and which they crave is what we call 'justice' and 'equity', inasmuch as 'rule by freedom' means establishing equality in judgements and laws so that the ruler cannot oppress any human being. Indeed, in this country the laws are the ultimate court and serve as a lesson. Freedom, in the words of the poet, occurs when:*
>
> Justice has filled its regions
>
> and happiness and fulfillment reign there[9]

The dawn of the modern era in the history of the Middle East is often placed by historians at Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion and occupation of Egypt from 1798-1801. This dating is convenient as it coincides with the turn of the nineteenth century and marks the first of many European occupations of Arab lands that would bring considerable change to the region. One of the changes that the French are said to have initiated is the introduction of 'modern' or 'liberal' political concepts that supposedly had been absent from Arab thought. This transition is often illustrated with examples from the writings of two Egyptian scholars, 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti (1754-1825/6) and Rifa'a Rafi' al-Tahtawi (1801-73). Jabarti is portrayed as the representative of traditional Arab/Islamic thought and its assumed rejection of modernity. On the other hand, Tahtawi, who studied in France, is presented as a representative of the modern age.

In this chapter, I will argue that much more continuity exists in the thought of these two scholars than is usually presented. I will illustrate this continuity through examining their conception of political freedom. It has been claimed that Jabarti failed to understand this concept because he misinterpreted the French term *liberté*. However, I will show that he employed the concept of political freedom even though he did not any use any single word to identify it. Tahtawi made the novel contribution of identifying this concept with the term *al-hurriyah*. Yet despite some superficial differences, Tahtawi and Jabarti conceived of political freedom in remarkably similar ways. Both emphasized the importance of just and equitable rule to protect individuals from unwarranted interference by others. In addition, both Tahtawi and Jabarti advocated the freedom of belief for all of Egypt's religious communities, however, neither extended this freedom to include conversion from Islam.

JABARTI AND THE FRENCH OCCUPATION

Jabarti has been described by some as the greatest modern historian of the Muslim world.[10] While this is debatable it can be said with confidence that he wrote the most comprehensive history of the French occupation of Egypt (1798-1801). In fact, Jabarti wrote three separate accounts of this tumultuous period. The first, *Tarikh Muddat al-Faransis bi-Misr* (*Muddat*), was written in 1798 and chronicles the first seven months of the occupation. The second, *Mazhar al-taqdis bi-Zawal Dawlat al-Faransis* (*Mazhar*) was completed in December 1801 as the French occupation was drawing to a close. The

[9] Al-Tahtawi's commentary on the French *Charter* in *Takhlis al-Ibriz fi Talkhis*, 206.

third account was written as part of a much larger work of history, *'Aja'ib al-Athar fi al-Tarajim wa'l-Akhbar* (*'Aja'ib*), which covers the period 1688-1821.[11] The first three volumes of *'Aja'ib*, including the account of the occupation, were compiled during 1805-6 after the expulsion of the French. However, Jabarti began collecting biographic and chronological data for this work as early as 1776.[12] By the time rumors began to spread of the French landing on the shores of Egypt in 1798, Jabarti was well prepared to write his accounts, which became the most important and reliable sources on the French occupation for both Muslim and European histories.[13]

In addition to providing a reliable historical record of events, Jabarti's narration of the occupation is interesting for what it reveals about his understanding of political concepts. Unfortunately, his writings have often been studied by scholars seemingly intent on making two false claims about Jabarti. First, that he could not understand 'European' political concepts, like freedom, that were incompatible with this traditional way of thinking. Second, that he blindly rejected these concepts once he was exposed to them because, as a Muslim scholar, he was inherently opposed to such 'liberal' concepts. These claims frequently accompany the common narrative of the French occupation that credits the arrival of Napoleon's forces in 1798 with the introduction of 'progress' and 'modernity' to Egypt that was characterized by 'decline' and 'traditionalism.' With this view of eighteenth century Egypt as a sort of cultural wasteland, both Western and Arab historians have argued that Jabarti's remarkable works represent the revival of a classical

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[10] David Ayalon, "The Historian Jabarti and His Background," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 23, no. 2 (1960): 218.
[11] Ibid., 222.
[12] Ibid., 223.

tradition of Islamic historiography that was essentially dead throughout the Ottoman era.[14]

However, these assumptions have been challenged by more recent scholarship. Peter Gran, for example, argues in *Islamic Roots of Capitalism* that eighteenth century Egypt, far from being a cultural wasteland, experienced a commercial revival that was accompanied by a cultural revival in the areas of history and literature during the second half of the century, especially from 1760-90.[15] Within this context, Jabarti's works should not be seen as the products "of a genius in a vacuum" but rather the culmination of a larger revival in history writing.[16] Similarly, Nelly Hanna describes the development in the eighteenth century of an Egyptian middle class culture that "constituted one of the foundations of the 'modernity' upon which the nineteenth century rested."[17] In addition, she argues that this middle class culture, which expressed itself through books and literary salons, contained a significant non-religious dimension and this contradicts the claim that the eighteenth century was dominated by religion until secularism was introduced to Egypt by the French.[18] In addition, Jane Murphy argues that a rich appreciation and tradition of science flourished in Egypt among eighteenth century religious scholars, including Jabarti.[19]

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[13] Ibid., 233.
[14] Yoav Di-Capua, *Gatekeepers of the Arab Past; Historians and History Writing in Twentieth-Century Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 6-8.
[15] Peter Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism; Egypt, 1760-1840* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979).
[16] Ibid, 182.
[17] Nelly Hanna, *In Praise of Books* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003),172.
[18] Ibid, 12-15.
[19] Jane Holt Murphy, "Improving the mind and delighting the spirit; Jabarti and the sciences in eighteenth-century Ottoman Cairo" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2006).

Scholars asserting that Jabarti failed to understand political concepts like freedom often base this conclusion solely on how he interpreted the French political vocabulary. Particular scrutiny has been given to how Jabarti quoted and commented on the first Napoleonic proclamation, distributed by the French upon their arrival in Egypt in 1798. Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, for instance, obsesses over the omission of the word 'Republic' from the proclamation's preamble as it was reproduced in '*Aja'ib.* The original preamble reads: "On behalf of the French Republic which is based upon the foundation of liberty and equality."[20] According to Abu-Lughod, Jabarti omitted this "perplexing term" because it surpassed his comprehension and "even after he had gained knowledge of the background of Napoleon he still preferred to ignore it."[21] In addition to being condescending, this argument is entirely unfounded because Jabarti in fact included the word 'Republic' in his earlier reproduction of the preamble in *Muddat,* which was written in 1798, several years before *'Aja'ib*.[22]

Abu-Lughod's haphazard research is beside the point. What is of interest is the eagerness and ease with which he declared Jabarti's incomprehension of certain political concepts based on the omission of a single word. Jabarti's commentary on the preamble in *Muddat* reveals that he, in fact, had a sound understanding of the basic history of the French revolution and the political concepts associated with it:

> [T]his proclamation is sent from their Republic, that means their body politic, because they have no chief or sultan with whom they all agree, like others, whose function is to speak on their behalf. For when they rebelled against their sultan

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20 'Abd al-Rahman Al-Jabarti, *Tarikh Muddat al-Faransis bi-Misr (Jabarti's Chronicle of the First Seven Months of the French Occupation of Egypt)*, trans. S. Moreh (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 40.
21 Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery of Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963),) 21.
22 Al-Jabarti, *Tarikh Muddat al-Faransis bi-Misr*, 40-2.

> six years ago and killed him, the people agreed unanimously that there was not to be a single ruler but that their state, territories, laws, and administration of their affairs, should be in the hands of the intelligent and wise men among them. They appointed persons chosen by them and made them heads of the army, and below them generals and commanders of thousands, two hundreds, and tens, administrators and advisers, on condition that they were all to be equal and none superior to any other in view of the equality of creation and nature. They made this the foundation and basis of their system. This is the meaning of their statement 'based upon the foundation of liberty and equality.' Their term 'liberty' means that they are not slaves like the Mamluks; 'equality' has the aforesaid meaning.[23]

Some have seized on this definition of liberty as evidence that Jabarti, and Arabs in general, did not understand freedom as a political concept. Leon Zolondek writes that Jabarti's commentary on *al-hurriyah* "echoes the conventional meaning of the term, i.e., the converse of slavery or of predestination. At no time up to the nineteenth century did it seem to have had the meaning of *libertas* – that of citizenship, of the right to share in the conduct of government."[24] Similarly, Franz Rosenthal writes that *al-hurriyah* was primarily a legal concept in Arab thought signifying the opposite of slavery and that it "did not achieve the status of a fundamental political concept."[25] It is true that *al-hurriyah* was not a political *term* in classical Arabic; however, it is inappropriate to conclude that the political *concept* of freedom was absent from Arab thought. Therefore, Jabarti's commentary on the word *al-hurriyah* should be interpreted solely as that – commentary on a word and not a political concept.

If we avoid the mistake of focusing exclusively on Jabarti's use of particular words and instead consider the larger ideas he presents, we can see that Jabarti did in fact

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[23] Ibid, 42-3.

[24] Leon Zolondek, "The French Revolution in Arabic Literature," *Muslim World* 57, no. 3 (July 1967): 203-211.

[25] *Encyclopedia of Islam, 2nd Edition*, s.v. "al-Hurriyya," by Franz Rosenthal.

use the political concept of freedom although he did not have a particular term to identify it. In his accounts of the French occupation, Jabarti employs both the negative and positive senses of political freedom, which can be expressed succinctly as 'the freedom from interference' and 'the freedom to live as one desires' respectively.[26] The common element in both conceptions of freedom is that they require the "holding off of something or someone… intruders and despots of one kind or another." [27] In Jabarti's narrative, he repeatedly emphasizes the foreignness of the French, indicating that their occupation represented outside interference and a violation of Egypt's freedom. If the French had been Muslims, for example, then they could argue that their occupation did not constitute interference. In fact, the French attempted to make this very argument. The first Napoleonic proclamation, for instance, begins with the Islamic evocation, "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate" and it instructs the religious leaders to tell the nation that "the French are also faithful Muslims, and in confirmation of this they invaded Rome and destroyed there the Papal See, which was always exhorting the Christians to make war with Islam."[28] In response, Jabarti argued that "their Islam is fraud." Further, he took France's attack on Rome as evidence that the French "are opposed to both Christians and Muslims, and do not hold fast to any religion."[29] This portrayal of France as a faithless country reinforces its foreignness in relation to all of Egypt's religious communities.

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26 Isaiah Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty; An Inaugural Lecture delivered before the University of Oxford on 31 October, 1958* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 6-55.
27 Ibid, 43.
28 Al-Jabarti, *Tarikh Muddat al-Faransis bi-Misr*, 40-1.
29 Ibid, 47.

A large portion of Jabarti's commentary on the Napoleonic proclamation is occupied with criticism of its misuse of Arabic grammar and writing conventions. The following is just one of many similar examples:

> The word *al-an* (now) is in the accusative, being an adverb modifying the verb *hadara* (has come) and *sa'a* (the hour) is a subject. So the meaning is: the hour of their punishment has now come'. It is much better to delete the word now (*al-an*), the adverb being redundant, because *al-an* is a noun denoting present time, and it is the same as the hour of punishment. It requires some constraint to turn it into a simple adverb of time, may God afflict them with every calamity.[30]

Some might find this degree of concern with grammar petty or irrelevant compared to the larger issues at stake. However, Jabarti is not simply pointing out grammatical mistakes. He is further underscoring the foreignness of the proclamation's authors. Every misplaced word and incorrect conjugation exposes the French as outsiders. Arabic is not only the common language of Egyptians but also the language of Islam − the language of God. Hence, the linguistic failings of the proclamation mark the French as non-Muslims as well as non-Egyptians. Jabarti makes the same point by describing some of their unseemly behaviors: "Whenever a Frenchman has to perform an act of nature he does so wherever he happens to be, even in full view of people, and he goes away as he is, without washing his private parts….They have intercourse with any woman who pleases them and vice versa….It is their custom to shave both their moustaches and beard. Some of them leave the hair of their cheeks only."[31] In summary, the various ways in which Jabarti portrayed the French as foreign served to support his view that their usurpation of power constituted a foreign interference in Egypt's affairs.

[30] Ibid, 44.

This foreign interference constitutes a loss of freedom for Egyptians as a corporate entity, but Jabarti also makes clear that the French occupation limited the freedom of individuals. For example, he describes how Egyptians were subject to unwarranted arrest by the French. In one case, the wife of a prominent man was summoned by a French officer, Dupuy, for questioning in a matter related to her servant. After being interrogated, she was not allowed to return home despite the pleas of several sheikhs on her behalf. Jabarti reports that she was brought to a judge the next day who "imposed upon her (a fine)" despite that "they could not prove anything against her in this groundless case."[32] Thus a woman from a respectable family was forced to sleep outside of her home in the company of strangers and was fined without cause.

In addition to arbitrary detention, Egyptians were subject to the confiscation of their property. In the first weeks of the occupation, the French established a new legal court, or *diwan*, and issued new property laws that, according to Jabarti, were "dedicated to one purpose, namely robbing people of their money by devious means and despoiling them of their real estate, inherited property and the like."[33] The holdings of landlords, for example, were confiscated by the French if they could not present what was deemed to be a valid certificate of ownership. In "many cases it was difficult or impossible for a landowner to prove the validity of his certificate and verify its existence in the registers due to incidents of death or travel." [34] The new regime also confiscated the estates of deceased persons whose relatives did not file the appropriate paperwork and pay a fee

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[31] Ibid, 43.
[32] Ibid, 78.
[33] Ibid, 79.
[34] Ibid.

within twenty-four hours.[35] On the same day these new laws were announced, the French "looted the property of the soldiers of the galleon who had served the Amirs. They also plundered the caravanserai of 'Ali Bey…on the pretext that they had fought against them on the side of the Mamluks…."[36]

Restrictions were also imposed upon Egyptians' movement. Jabarti reported with dismay that people "could not travel without a permit (*waraqa*) for which one had to pay a fee."[37] The new regime additionally "called upon the public to desist from meddling in and discussing political matters, or if a group of wounded or defeated [French] soldiers passed their way, not to mock them or clap, as they habitually did." Jabarti does not describe these events with the terms 'freedom of movement' or 'freedom of expression,' but it is clear that he is using the very concepts that they identify. Without using such terms, Jabarti decries the loss of Egyptians' freedoms to travel and discuss political matters. Thus, it is apparent that Jabarti's conception of freedom is much more expansive than simply the absence of slavery. In light of this, it is also difficult to accept the claim that Jabarti did not recognize the political implications of freedom. In each of the above examples, Jabarti describes a loss of freedom as a result of interference by a new political regime. The causal relationship between the French occupation and the loss of freedom is explicit in Jabarti's account of protests, which were led by members of the *'ulama'*:

> Indeed, they preached to them a clear sermon, exclaiming 'O Muslims, the jihad (holy war) is incumbent upon you. How can you free men agree to pay the poll tax (jizya) to the unbelievers? Have you no pride? Has not the call reached you?' Thus this deluded one forgot that he was a prisoner in the hands of the French,

[35] Ibid, 80.
[36] Ibid, 81.
[37] Ibid.

> who occupied the fortress and its walls, the high hills and the low; fortifying them all with forbidding instruments of war; such as cannons on carriages, rifles, carbines, and bombs.[38]

Jabarti describes one of the religious scholars as a prisoner in the hands of the French, even though the man is free to roam the streets stirring up rebellion. Although the scholar is not literally imprisoned, he has lost his political freedom to the French who occupy the fortress (*al-qala'a*) of Cairo, the symbol of both political and military authority. Jabarti is expressing a loss of positive freedom because the previous source of interference in society − a government which he viewed as legitimate − has been replaced by an illegitimate occupation. Jabarti describes this shift in power in very tangible terms:

> On that day they ordered the inhabitants of the Citadel to vacate their homes and move into town and live there. Thus the inhabitants left the Citadel and the French brought up cannons which they positioned in various places. They further demolished some buildings and erected walls. Thus they pulled down the high places and raised up the low places. They built on the foundations of Bab al-'Azab in al-Rumayla and changed its features and disfigured its beauties and wiped out the monuments of scholars and the assembly rooms of sultans and great men and took what works of art were left on its great gates and in its magnificent sitting rooms….[39]

This shows that Jabarti associated the change in political regimes with the loss of an entire social and cultural system. The French destroyed the country's artistic and scholarly heritage, and in their place built the structures of a new order. In the same way that the French "pulled down the high places and raised up the low places" in the physical sense, they also demoted those in society who had previously held high positions and

[38] Ibid, 93
[39] Ibid, 81.

promoted those of low status.[40] In addition to the former political elite attached to the Mamluks, respected artisans also lost their status due to the economic turmoil caused by the occupation. Many of them "were forced to earn their livelihood in low occupations such as selling pastry, frying fish, cooking food in restaurants" and as donkey drivers who were hired out by the French.[41] In contrast, religious minorities of low status rose in the social ranks:

> Another development was the elevation of the lowliest Copts, Syrian and Greek Orthodox Christians, and Jews. They rode horses and adorned themselves with swords because of their service to the French; they strutted around haughtily, openly expressed obscenities, and derided the Muslims.

Jabarti is describing what appears to him to be a reversal of the natural social order, or at least the proper order of a Muslim society. Muslims are publicly mocked by non-Muslims. Copts appointed as tax collectors go into the country "like rulers wreaking havoc among the Muslims with arrests, beatings, insults, and ceaseless harassment in their demands for money."[42] Christians were even appointed to supervise the Islamic religious endowments, or *waqfs*.[43] As might be expected, Jabarti also decried a decline in the faith and morality of the population. Some Muslims, for example, "were enticed by the devils to abandon the faith."[44] Women began to discard the "veil of shame" in public.[45] The state of moral depravity is exemplified by one particularly wild night of partying on the Nile, in which Christians went out on boats with their "women and

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[40] Ibid.
[41] 'Abd al-Rahman Al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib al-Athar fi'l-Tarajim wa'l-Akhbar ('Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti's History of Egypt)*, trans. Thomas Philip and Moshe Perlman (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1994), 69.
[42] Al-Jabarti, *Tarikh Muddat al-Faransis bi-Misr*, 68.
[43] Ibid, 91.
[44] Al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib al-Athar fi'l-Tarajim wa'l-Akhbar*, 69-70.

whores" and displayed publicly "the vilest laughter and derision, blasphemies and mockery of the Muslims;" however "none of the people with authority or anyone else rebuked anybody."[46] Without pious Muslim rulers, there is no enforcement of moral authority in society. Jabarti succinctly makes this point with a single line of poetry:

> If the master of the house beats the tambourine, dancing will be the habit of all the people in the house. [47]

Far from discouraging government interference in society, Jabarti expects the master of the house to uphold morality and social order. It must be recognized that the social order Jabarti envisions would restrict the negative freedom of Jews and Christians more than Muslims. However, every social order restricts the freedom of its members, even those systems that are purportedly based on the ideals of liberalism. According to Isaiah Berlin, the French revolution was "an eruption of the desire for 'positive' freedom of collective self-direction on the part of a large body of Frenchmen who felt liberated as a nation, even though the result was, for a good many of them, a severe restriction of individual freedoms."[48]

Jabarti's vision of a proper social order certainly gives preference to Muslims over non-Muslims. However, that does not mean that non-Muslims would be without rights. Throughout his accounts, Jabarti condemns attacks against the security, possessions, or honor of non-Muslims. For example, he condemns those who mistreat non-Muslims or plan acts of revenge after the withdrawal of French forces. He writes

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[45] Ibid, 253.
[46] Ibid, 123.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Berlin, 47-8.

that Muslim soldiers who ambushed Christians wearing multi-colored garb "were intent not on the victory of the faith but on booty and seizure of clothes."[49] Jabarti also mentions the decree of a sheikh, which says that "Christians and Jews, the *ahl al-dhimma*, should not be molested or interfered with." The *ahl al-dhimma*, or people of the *dhimma*, refers to a contract in Islamic societies between the Muslim ruler and non-Muslim subjects by which their safety was guaranteed in exchange for a poll tax.[50] Jabarti refers to this contract in his final entry of *Aja'ib*, in which he describes the Greek revolt of 1821 against the Ottoman Empire:

> The Greeks continue doing corrupt deeds, blocking the sea lanes to travelers, seizing everyone they come across in Muslim ships, and rebelling in disobedience to their covenant. God willing, we shall relate to you all their subsequent doings in the next section. God grants success to what is right, and to Him is the return.[51]

In summary, Jabarti understood and used the political concept of freedom in both its negative and positive senses. He believed that Egyptian society should be governed by a Muslim ruler who maintained social and moral order. This would require some limits to be placed on individual liberty for all members of society (especially non-Muslims), but people would also be protected from unwarranted interference. For Jabarti, the French occupation violated both senses of freedom. In the positive sense, the community was not free to live according to Islamic law, and in the negative sense, individuals suffered unjustified limitations on their freedom of movement, expression, and ownership.

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[49] Al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib al-Athar fi'l-Tarajim wa'l-Akhbar*, 294

[50] Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 119.

[51] Al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib al-Athar fi'l-Tarajim wa'l-Akhbar*, 451.

Strangely, many scholars have interpreted Jabarti's opposition to the French as the dogmatic rejection of foreign values and political concepts like liberty. John Livingston, for example, describes Jabarti as the "earliest expression" of the 'traditional mind,' which "opposed western intellectual incursions in practically all its forms in the name of Islamic purity."[52] Similarly, Shmuel Moreh writes that Jabarti represents the "spirit of the Muslim East" and "categorically dismisses freedom of behavior, thought, and belief …."[53] These scholars seem to forget that Jabarti was not encountering the French on neutral territory but under a military and political occupation. His opposition is far from a rejection of freedom, but to the contrary, a defense of freedom from foreign interference.

TAHTAWI AND THE EXPANSION OF *AL-HURRIYAH*

We have seen how historians have often portrayed Jabarti as representative of 'traditional' Arab thought and its blind rejection of the 'modern' political ideas of the West. Rifa'a Rafi' al-Tahtawi, on the other hand, is given a very different role as one of the first modernizers of Arab thought. The tone of each writer's relationship with the French was certainly different. While Jabarti encountered the French under occupation, Tahtawi traveled to France during peace time. However, just as Jabarti's opposition to the French occupation should not be confused as his miscomprehension or rejection of the concept of freedom, Tahtawi's study of French political thought does not equal his wholesale acceptance of those ideas. Beyond differences in their rhetoric, Jabarti and

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[52] John Livingston, "Shaykhs Jabarti and 'Attar: Islamic Reaction and Response to Western Science in Egypt," *Der Islam* 74, no. 1 (1997): p. 92.
[53] Al-Jabarti, *Tarikh Muddat al-Faransis bi-Misr*, 24.

Tahtawi actually shared a very similar conception of freedom. The unique contribution to Arab thought by Tahtawi was his translation of the French political vocabulary into Arabic. While Jabarti did not have a word to identify the concept of freedom, Tahtawi translated the French term *liberté* into Arabic as *al-hurriyah* and then connected this term to the previously unnamed concept.

Tahtawi came from a family with a long history of religious scholarship, and like Jabarti, he received classical training in the Islamic sciences at al-Azhar. With the assistance of one of his teachers, Shaykh Hasan al-'Attar, Tahtawi was first appointed as imam of an Egyptian army regiment and then, in 1826, as imam of a student mission sent by Muhammad 'Ali to France.[54] Although Tahtawi was sent as a chaperone and religious guide for the mission, he also studied with the students. For approximately the first two years of their stay in France, the students concentrated on learning the French language before they were each assigned to a specific field of study. Tahtawi was chosen for training in the art of translation, a skill that he would use throughout his career.[55] As part of his training, Tahtawi translated selections from a wide variety of French works, including those of political philosophers such as Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Voltaire.[56] Upon returning to Egypt in 1831, Tahtawi continued his translation work in various official positions including director of the government translation bureau, where he oversaw the work of several other translators.[57] This period in Egyptian history has been

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54 Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age,* 69.
55 Rifa'a Rafi' Al-Tahtawi, *Takhlis al-Ibriz fi Talkhis Bariz* (*An Imam in Paris: Account of a Stay in France by an Egyptian Cleric)*, trans. Daniel Newman (London: Saqi, 2004), 75-77.
56 Ibid, 86.
57 Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age,* 71.

described as the second Arab translation movement following the mediaeval Greek translations, and Tahtawi "was both the formidable driving force and one of the principal contributors" of this movement.[58]

During this process, Tahtawi created a considerable number of Arabic neologisms in order to translate French words for which there was no Arabic equivalent. Mohammed Sawaie provides a survey of the methods he used to coin new words. The first method was Arabicization, by which the pronunciation of foreign words was represented by the Arabic script. This method was typically used to coin a single Arabic word, such as *jurnal* (newspaper) or *al-biyanu* (piano), but it could also produce a compound of an Arabic word and a foreign word, such as *ahl al-jurnal* (editors) or *akadimat al-hikma* (medical academy).[59] Arabicization was used when no appropriate term could be found in Arabic that denoted the approximate meaning of an imported term or concept. However, when it was possible, Arab writers preferred to rejuvenate a classical Arabic word, the meaning of which could be semantically expanded or narrowed to approximate the meaning of the foreign term. Again, this could be done by restoring a single Arabic word, such as *al-irsaliyya* (the mission, missionary), *al-mutawalli* (ruler), or *al-mihamm* (bathtub). If a single word from classical Arabic could not sufficiently communicate the intended meaning, then two Arabic words could be combined to create a new compound term. A few examples of compound words that were created in this way include *kursi al-mamlakah* (capital), *fann al-miyah* (hydraulics), *bayt al-sihha* (hospital), and *ina al-qur'a*

58 Al-Tahtawi, *Takhlis al-Ibriz fi Talkhis Bariz*, 15-67.
59 Ibid., p. 402

(ballot box).[60] A final strategy for translating foreign words was to adopt a colloquial term that was already in popular usage but for which no equivalent classical Arabic word could be found. Examples of such colloquial terms include *jarayhi* (surgeon), *al-qahwah* (coffee house), and *al-furjah* (sightseeing).[61]

Tahtawi's translation of *liberté* as *al-hurriyah* is an example of the semantic expansion of a classical Arabic word. As discussed previously, *al-hurriyah* was used in classical Arabic primarily as a legal term to denote the opposite of 'unfree, slave.' It was also used as an "ethical term denoting those 'noble' of character and behavior."[62] Bernard Lewis writes that *al-hurriyah* in its classical usage "was a legal, occasionally a social, but never a political term."[63] It is this classical meaning of *al-hurriyah* that Jabarti was employing when he explained that the French "term 'liberty' means that they are not slaves like the Mamluks..."[64] Therefore, when Tahtawi translated the French political term *liberté* as *al-hurriyah* he was expanding this more narrow meaning to give it political connotations.

Tahtawi's first use of *al-hurriyah* as a political term is found in his famous account of his journey to and stay in France, *Takhlis al-Ibriz fi Talkhis Bariz* (The Extraction of Pure Gold in the Abridgement of Paris).[65] This travelogue was published in 1834 following Tahtawi's return to Egypt, but was primarily written during his time in

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[60] Ibid. p. 403
[61] Ibid. p. 404
[62] *Encyclopedia of Islam, 2nd Edition*, s.v. "al-Hurriyya," by Franz Rosenthal,
[63] Bernard Lewis, *Political Words and Ideas in Islam* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2008),186.
[64] Al-Jabarti, *Tarikh Muddat al-Faransis bi-Misr*, 43.
[65] Al-Tahtawi, *Takhlis al-Ibriz fi Talkhis Bariz*, 100.

Paris.[66] In this wide-ranging work, Tahtawi shares his impressions of French society and describes in great deal almost every imaginable facet of life in the city. In the third section of the book, Tahtawi proposes to "raise the veil on the political organization of the French, and discuss most of their laws, so that their wonderful government system can serve as an example to those wishing to learn from it."[67] After a general description of the state, Tahtawi includes his translation of the French *Charter*, the fourth Article of which reads: "Each of them is free, and their freedom (*al-hurriyah)* is guaranteed. No-one can be interfered with except in accordance with some rights laid down in the law in the form prescribed by it and as requested by the ruler."[68] This is the first use of the term *al-hurriyah* in the sense of political freedom and so Tahtawi must explain this new meaning to his readers:

> That which they call freedom and which they crave is what we call 'justice' and 'equity', inasmuch as 'rule by freedom' means establishing equality in judgements and laws so that the ruler cannot oppress any human being. Indeed, in this country the laws are the ultimate court and serve as a lesson. Freedom, in the words of the poet, occurs when:
>
> *Justice has filled its regions*
>
> *and happiness and fulfillment reign there*[69]

The terms justice (*al-'adl*) and equity (*al-insaf*) are classical Islamic ideals of governance that Tahtawi's readers would have been familiar with.[70] The relationship between freedom and these two ideals recalls Jabarti's writing, in which we saw that

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[66] *Encyclopedia of Islam, 2nd Edition*, s.v. "Rifa'a Bey al-Tahtawi," by K. Ohrnberg,
[67] Al-Tahtawi, *Takhlis al-Ibriz fi Talkhis*, 189.
[68] Ibid, 195.
[69] Al-Tahtawi, *Takhlis al-Ibriz fi Talkhis*, 206.
[70] *Encyclopedia of Islam, 2nd Edition*, s.v. "al-Hurriyya," by Bernard Lewis.

Jabarti associated the loss of political freedom at the hands of the French occupiers with a decline in justice and equity. Tahtawi aptly identified this concept for which Jabarti did not have a specific term. It should be noted that Tahtawi was not necessarily the first to use *al-hurriyah* to identify the concept of political freedom. We see that the Napoleon Proclamation, which Jabarti reproduced, translated *liberté* using this word. However, no attempt was made by the French to relate *al-hurriyah* to political freedom in a way that would be understood by an Arab audience. Tahtawi, on the other hand, not only connects *al-hurriyah* to *liberté* but also to the Arab concept of political freedom. In this sense, he created the linguistic bridge between the French and Arab concepts. It is impressive how Tahtawi was able to succinctly define political freedom by relating it to two other political concepts. The concepts he chose, justice and equity, are appropriate ones because they were already familiar concepts and accurately encapsulate the meaning of political freedom. Both justice and equity protect individuals from unwarranted interference in their lives, which is at the heart of freedom.[71]

Not everyone has appreciated the success of Tahtawi's translation. Daniel Newman writes that "in *Takhlis*, we are not dealing with a liberal, as 'freedom' is explained as that 'which we call justice and equity,' two cornerstones in Islamic political theory, rather than the way in which he saw it in practice in France."[72] This is a very strange comment for several reasons. First, Newman is arguing that Tahtawi should not be considered a 'liberal,' a label rooted in Western political thought and entirely unapplicable to an early-nineteenth century Egyptian. Secondly, it seems to be implied

[71] Berlin, 6.
[72] Al-Tahtawi, *Takhlis al-Ibriz fi Talkhis*, 89.

that justice and equity are somehow incompatible with freedom, or at least a 'liberal' conception of freedom (whatever that might be). Thirdly, it fails to appreciate that Tahtawi's purpose was to explain the meaning of this concept to an Arab audience in a way that would be understanble and relevant. According to Newman, another proof of Tahtawi's illiberality is that he does not "even attempt to address the fundamental incompatibility between the concept of 'freedom' and slavery, which was still very much alive in his home country."[73] It is not clear why Tahtawi should be held accountable for the persistence of slavery in Egypt or how this might impair his ability to explain the concept of freedom.

In addition to providing a general explanation of freedom, Tahtawi also described several types of freedoms, including religious freedom, which are enshrined in the *Charter*. He translated the fifth Article, which reads: "Each resident of France may practise his religion as he pleases, without interference from anyone, and can even ask assistance for this. It is forbidden to prevent anyone from performing his worship."[74] Tahtawi provides further explanation of this freedom in his commentary: "One of the things ensuing from freedom amongst the French is that each person who practises his chosen religion enjoys the protection of the state, and anyone interfering with somebody's religious worship is punished…Every Frenchman has the right to express an opinion on political or religious matters, on condition that it does not harm the order established in the legal codices."[75] In this way, Tahtawi makes the direct connection

[73] Ibid.
[74] Al-Tahtawi, *Takhlis al-Ibriz fi Talkhis*, 196.
[75] Ibid., 210-211

between freedom and the protection of religious practice, which the *Charter* itself does not do. He is also aware that some limits must be placed on these freedoms.

These comments on freedom, and religious freedom in particular, are primarily descriptive and do not necessarily indicate Tahtawi's approval of them. However, other passages from *Takhlis* do show that he believed freedom to be beneficial to society. Tahtawi gave the following introduction to his translation of the *Charter*:

> We should like to include this book – even though most of what is in it cannot be found in the Book of the Almighty God, nor in the *sunna* of the Prophet – May God bless him and grant him salvation! – so that you may see how their intellect has decided that justice (*'adl*) and equity (*insaf*) are the causes for the civilization of kingdoms, the well-being of subjects, and how rulers and their subjects were led by this, to the extent that their country has prospered, their knowledge increased, their wealth accumulated and their hearts satisfied.[76]

We see in this passage that Tahtawi uses the concepts of justice and equity in the place of *al-hurriyah*, the political meaning of which he had not yet explained. Therefore, we can interpret that freedom is the source of civilizational greatness, prosperity, knowledge, and happiness. This has been revealed by the 'intellect,' or use of reason of the French, rather than from divine decree. Tahtawi does not believe that most of these ideas can be found in the religious texts of Islam, yet he still finds value in them. Tahtawi reveals his acceptance of these ideas when he writes that the "fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh articles are useful to the people of the country as well as to foreigners. This is why the population of this country has increased, and foreigners have greatly contributed to its prosperity."[77] Therefore, guarantees of freedom (fourth article) and

[76] Ibid., 194
[77] Ibid., 208.

religious freedom (fifth article) are contributors to French prosperity. This conclusion is significant because the Egyptian mission was sent by Muhammad Ali to determine the source of Europe's comparative prosperity with the hope of emulating it in Egypt. Tahtawi explains how religious freedom attracts foreigners in the following description of Paris:

> If you saw how it is managed, you would understand the perfect sense of tranquility enjoyed by strangers when they are there and the joy they experience when among the inhabitants. Most of the time the latter are friendly and pleasant towards strangers, even if they do not share the same religion. This is because most of the people of this city are Christians in name only and do not adhere to the precepts of their religion, nor do they display any zeal for it…. If you mention Islam to a Frenchman and contrast it with other religions, he will praise all of them as they enjoin people to do what is good and prohibit the reprehensible…On the whole, all religions may be practiced in France. One does not oppose a Muslim building a mosque or a Jew building a synagogue, etc.[78]

Tahtawi appreciates the religious tolerance of France and explains that its openness toward other religions results from the lack of religious zeal among the French people. However, it would be inaccurate to conclude that Tahtawi approved of irreligiosity as a condition for tolerance and prosperity. He was careful to mention in his preface to *Takhlis* that he would "approve only that which does not run counter to the prescriptions of Muhammadan law..."[79] As discussed earlier, Tahtawi proposed the idea that freedom, including religious freedom, is the basis for a civilization's prosperity and happiness even though the concept is not found in the Quran or tradition of the prophet. While it is not found in Islam, it does not contradict Islam and therefore it can be learned from. Nonetheless, there were some expressions of religious freedom that did violate

[78] Ibid, 126.

Islamic law in Tahtawi's view. For instance, he clearly condemned apostasy from Islam. Upon first arriving in France at the port of Marseilles, Tahtawi recounts meeting Egyptians who accompanied the French in their retreat from Egypt in 1801. He writes that it "is rare to find a Muslim among those who left with the French: some of them have died, whereas others have converted to Christianity – may God protect us from that!"[80]

Tahtawi would give religious freedom a similar treatment in *Murshid al-amin,* which was published nearly 30 years after *Takhlis* in 1862.[81] In *Murshid*, Tahtawi presents a systematic political philosophy although many of his ideas originate from *Takhlis*. He devotes an entire section to discussing political freedom, on which "the rights of all the people of civilized kingdoms" is based.[82] Tahtawi distinguishes five general types of freedom: natural freedom, freedom of behavior, religious freedom, civil freedom, and political freedom.[83] This list demonstrates the dramatic expansion of the Arabic vocabulary since the publication of *Takhlis*. Whereas he previously had to explain his use of *al-hurriyah* as a single word, he now comfortably combines it with other terms to create a wide variety of compound constructions, such as freedom of expression (*hurriyyat al-ta'bir*) and freedom of trade (*hurriyyat al-tijara*).[84] Tahtawi gives the following definition of religious freedom:

> Religious freedom is the freedom of belief, of opinion and of sect, provided it does not contradict the fundamentals of religion. An example would be the

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[79] Ibid, 100.
[80] Ibid, 154.
[81] *Encyclopedia of Islam, 2nd Edition*, s.v. "al-Hurriyya," by Bernard Lewis.
[82] Rifa'a Rafi' Al-Tahtawi, *Al-'Amal al-Kamila* (Beirut: Al-mu'asasa al-'arabiyya, li-ldarasat wa al-nashr, 1973),) 473.
[83] *Encyclopedia of Islam, 2nd Edition*, s.v. "al-Hurriyya," by Bernard Lewis.
[84] al-Tahtawi, *al-'Amal al-Kamila,* 470-5.

> theological opinions of the *al-Asha'irah* and the *al-Matiridiyah*; another would be the opinions of leading jurists within the doctrine of the branches. For by following any one of these schools, a human feels secure.[85]

Once again we see that people are free to practice their beliefs (*hurriyyat al-'aqida*), with the condition that they not depart from the fundamentals of religion (*asl al-din*).[86] This raises the question of whether Tahtawi would impose one interpretation of the fundamentals of Islam. However, he allows for the freedom of religious sects and different theological opinions within his definition of religious freedom. Tahtawi is concerned with apostasy from the faith rather than diversity within the faith. He also extends his religious freedom to non-Muslims. According to Albert Hourani, Tahtawi "begins with the Islamic concept of Christians and Jews as 'protected peoples,' *ahl al-dhimma*, and argues for the most liberal attitude towards them. They should be allowed entire religious freedom, and it is legitimate for Muslims to frequent their company."[87] These freedoms should be extended to foreigners as well as Egyptian Christians and Jews. Just as France benefits from the presence of foreigners, so should foreigners be attracted to settle in Egypt and share their knowledge with Egyptians.[88] While the Arabs once had the most advanced civilization, they must now learn from the Europeans in order to regain their greatness. This is yet another way in which Tahtawi sees freedom as the cause of progress and civilization.

CONCLUSION

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85 Azzam Tamimi, "The Renaissance of Islam," *Daedalus* 132, no. 3 (2003): 53.
86 al-Tahtawi, *al-'Amal al-Kamila,* 474
87 Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, 80.
88 Ibid., 81.

Within the historiographic paradigm that imagines Napoleon's invasion of Egypt as the opening scene of modernity in the Arab world, Jabarti and Tahtawi are cast in opposing roles. As the traditional antagonist, Jabarti resists the efforts of the French to introduce 'modern' political concepts that he fails to comprehend. Tahtawi, on the other hand, plays the protagonist as he discovers these political concepts during his stay in France and then introduces them to Arabs. We have seen the weakness of this paradigm, which confuses rhetoric for substance. While Jabarti was not familiar with the term *liberté*, he certainly understood the underlying political concept of freedom, as evidenced by his opposition to the French occupation. Knowing this, we cannot claim that Tahtawi introduced political freedom to Arab thought. However, this does not discount his contribution of naming this concept through a semantic expansion of *al-hurriyah*.

By introducing this term, Tahtawi allowed political freedom to become a conscious object of political thought, creating a linguistic bridge by which French ideas on *liberté* could be easily related in Arabic. One such idea was that political freedom is a precondition for the strength and prosperity of a civilization. Although Tahtawi's contributions were novel, the similarities between his conception of political freedom and that of Jabarti are striking. Both emphasized the necessity of just and equitable rule to protect individuals from unwarranted interference by other people, or by the government itself. In addition, both Jabarti and Tahtawi advocated the freedom of belief but neither extended this to include conversion from one's faith, especially on the part of Muslims. Therefore, the political thought of Jabarti and Tahtawi demonstrates that there was greater continuity than change between the generations that straddle the so-called dawn of the modern age in the Arab world.

CHAPTER II

Butrus al-Bustani and the Freedom of Conscience

> *Unquestionably, freedom of conscience cannot be bestowed by the rulers of this world. And even if all the forces of this earth and hell joined together, they would not be able to wrest [freedom] from the heart that owns it… For once any person has tasted the sweetness of this divine freedom there is no way to return him to slavery.89*

Butrus al-Bustani (1819-83) wrote the above words in his account of As'ad al-Shidyaq (1798-1830), who like Bustani converted from Maronite Christianity to Protestantism while working with American missionaries in Beirut. As a result of his apostasy and refusal to recant, Shidyaq was harassed by Maronite religious leaders and detained in a monastery in 1826, where he ultimately died in 1830.[90] Following Shidyaq's death, American missionaries and the Maronite Church wrote conflicting narratives that portrayed Shidyaq as a martyr and traitor respectively. In 1860, Bustani published his own biography of Shidyaq, entitled *Qissat As'ad al-Shidyaq* (The Story of As'ad al-Shidyaq). Bustani's purpose in writing this account was not to rekindle the arguments between Protestants and Maronites, but rather to expose the evils of religious intolerance and to begin to express his "vision of modern coexistence based on a secular equality of religions and cultures."[91] Bustani uses this story of the young convert who

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89 Ussama Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven: American missionaries and the failed conquest of the Middle East* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 200.
90 Ibid, 2.
91 Ibid, 181.

was unjustly persecuted to argue for the freedom of conscience, which he termed, *hurriyat al-damir*.

The first chapter of this study challenged the common view that the arrival of French forces in Egypt in 1798, led by Napoleon Bonaparte, marked the introduction of the concept of political freedom, along with modernity more generally, to a previously stagnant, traditional society that only understood freedom as the opposite of slavery. Yet the French occupation can serve as a historical marker of sorts for the commencement of an era of increased Western influence in Arab lands. In addition to the direct military interventions of European powers, this influence also came in the form of educational institutions that were founded by Christian missionaries who enjoyed the protection afforded to them by these foreign powers.

American missionaries were particularly active in Syria[92] and the schools and colleges they founded – including the Syrian Protestant College, which became the American University of Beirut – enjoyed great success. Similar to the French in Egypt, these missionaries and their educational institutions are often credited with encouraging the advancement of freedom and modernity in Syria. This chapter will evaluate that claim through a close study of the term *hurriyat al-damir*, or freedom of conscience. To what degree does Bustani's translation of this term reflect the influence of the missionaries whom he worked with? How did Bustani's conception of freedom of conscience, and freedom more generally, differ from that of the missionaries?

[92] Throughout this study, Syria refers to the various provinces that were once a part of *Bilad al-Sham* (Greater Syria) and not the modern nation-state of Syria.

BUSTANI AND ARAB CULTURAL REFORM

As a young man, Bustani was employed by both the military and educational arms of the Western presence in Syria. In 1840, Bustani was hired as an interpreter by the British army, which had intervened on behalf of the Ottomans in order to expel Ibrahim Pasha, the son of Muhammad Ali, from Syria. At this time, Beirut was the center of American protestant missionary activities in Syria; however, they were forced to temporarily leave the city due to British bombardment. Yet as soon as the conflict was resolved, the missionaries returned and reopened their schools.[93] It is at one of these missionary schools, the Male Seminary, that Bustani was hired as a teacher after he finished his work with the British army. Bustani did not study at one of the missionary schools himself. At the age of 11, Bustani was sent to study at the prominent Maronite Seminary 'Ayn Waraqa, where As'ad Shidyaq and Faris Shidyaq were also educated. During the ten years that he spent at 'Ayn Waraqa, Bustani learned several languages in addition to Arabic, including French, Italian, and Latin.[94]

The linguistic training that Bustani received at 'Ayn Waraqa prepared him for the work he would undertake as an Arabic teacher to several missionaries and as a translator. Bustani must have been a skilled Arabic instructor, for two of his pupils, Dr. Cornelius Van Dyck and Eli Smith, were among only a few American missionaries who mastered the Arabic language. In 1847, Eli Smith began working on a new translation of the Bible into Arabic and Bustani became a close partner in this project as a translator and

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93 Makdisi, 187-189.

94 A. L. Tibawi, "The American Missionaries in Beirut and Butrus al-Bustani," *St. Anthony's Papers: Middle Eastern Affairs* 16, no. 3 (1963): 155-157.

copyist.[95] In addition, Bustani was given the opportunity to prepare introductory textbooks on topics such as arithmetic and Arabic grammar that were printed for use in the missionary schools. These texts were often adaptations of works by other scholars, but the significance of these projects should not be discounted because it was through successful editing and adaptation that Bustani gained the confidence to write his own original works, such as *Qissat As'ad Al-Shidyaq*.[96]

In 1851, after years of working very closely with American missionaries, Bustani returned to employment by a Western power. With the support of Van Dyck he was able to secure a position as the first dragoman of the United States consulate in Beirut. His motivation in making this transition was at least partially financial. As a teacher, translator, and copyist, Bustani's salary was approximately $300 a year, which was about half the average salary of an American missionary during the same period of time. He did not fail to notice this disparity and in correspondence with Eli Smith he requested to have his salary increased and even expressed his belief that Smith had blocked "him from earning more in time past."[97] Although Bustani was never directly employed by the American mission again, he continued to assist Eli Smith with the translation of the Bible and remained close friends with Smith until his death in 1857.[98]

Through his work with the British army, American missionaries, and the U.S. consulate, Bustani intimately experienced the expansion of Western influence in the Middle East. He witnessed what seemed to be the technological, political, military, and

[95] Makdisi, 193-194.
[96] Tibawi, 167.
[97] Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven*, 193.

scientific superiority of the West. For Bustani and other Arab writers and intellectuals, such as al-Tahtawi and Faris al-Shidyaq, the challenge of Western dominance resulted in "a cultural and linguistic identity crisis."[99] They struggled to explain what they perceived to be the decline of Arab civilization in contrast with the advancement and progress of Europe. For Bustani, the decline of the Arabs in relation to the West could be explained by a corresponding decline in the quality of learning. Arab civilization had thrived when its intellectual life was at its peak, such that it served as a model for Europe. Yet the fortunes of Arab and Western civilization were reversed once Arabs neglected reading due to "many conditions and varied causes."[100]

It is interesting that some aspects of Bustani's perception of Arab civilization mirrored the attitudes of the American missionaries, who praised the rich cultural and linguistic heritage of the Arabs. Eli Smith, for example, gave a lecture at the Syrian Society for Arts and Sciences in 1853 in which he evoked the past glories of Arab civilization as proof that the Arabs could become modern. To the mainly Arab audience he said, "As for your Arab ancestry, its literature is a connecting link between the ancient world, adorned with Roman and Grecian sciences, and the modern, adorned with the sciences of Europeans and their thorough research."[101] Bustani, who was a founding member of this society, was likely in attendance at this lecture, and he would have had many opportunities to discuss this issue with Smith as they worked together on a regular

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[98] Butrus Abu-Manneh, "The Christians between Ottomanism and Syrian Nationalism: The Ideas of Butrus Al-Bustani," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 11, no. 1 (May 1980): 289.
[99] Mohammed Sawaie, "Rifa'a Rafi' Al-Tahtawi and HIs Contributions to the Lexical Development of Modern Literary Arabic," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 32, no. 3 (August 2000):p.395
[100] Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, 100.
[101] Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven*, 196-197.

basis. In 1859, Bustani gave his own lecture in which he made similar references to the medieval apogee of Arab civilization, and he called on his fellow Arabs to undertake an Arab cultural awakening. These similarities prompted Makdisi to write that Bustani "painted an unabashedly positivist sketch for Arab reform on a missionary canvas." [102]

If the poor state of learning among Arabs was the reason for their decline, then Bustani believed that reforming the Arabic language would be an important part of their cultural revival. It was necessary to adapt the Arabic language so that it would be capable of effectively expressing the ideas of modern science. This would allow Arabic to serve as a conduit for the transfer of learning from Europe back to the Arab world. Bustani made substantial contributions to linguistic reform and participated in "the creation of a modern Arabic expository prose, of a language true to its past in grammar and idiom, but made capable of expressing simply, precisely, and directly the concepts of modern thought."[103]

Bustani not only worked to make Arabic an effective medium of communication but also participated in the actual transfer of knowledge from European languages into Arabic. In 1876 he began to publish the first Arabic encyclopedia, *Da'irat al-Ma'arif*, which was "full of the sciences and medicine, the engineering works and liberal ideas of Europe and America."[104] In 1862, Bustani began to compile the first modern Arabic dictionary, *Muhit al-Muhit*. This dictionary was based in large part on the classic Arabic dictionary, *Qamus al-Muhit*, by al-Firuzabadi yet it broke away from any traditional dictionary in its inclusion of colloquialisms, neologisms, and foreign and scientific

[102] Ibid,197.
[103] Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, 99-100.

terms.[105] In the introduction to the dictionary, Bustani described the work as "a small service from a lover of the fatherland (*muhib lil-watan*) whose highest ambitions and aims are to witness the progress of his compatriots in learning and civilization through the medium of their noble language."[106] This is an excellent example of how Bustani saw the modernization of the Arabic language as an essential component of the Arab renaissance.

HURRIYAT AL-DAMIR AND THE MODERN ARABIC LEXICON

Bustani was not alone in his belief that linguistic reform was central to the Arab cultural awakening. Tahtawi, Faris al-Shidyaq, and other leading figures of the nineteenth century Arab Renaissance (*Nahda*) also discussed the ways that the Arabic language needed to be modernized so that it could serve as a vehicle of modern learning. One of the greatest linguistic challenges facing these writers and intellectuals involved the translation of Western terms or concepts that Arabs encountered either through travel to Europe or through European influence in the Arab world. When confronted with a foreign term, they were forced to decide how it could best be expressed in Arabic so that the original meaning was maintained while respecting traditional Arabic as much as possible. Through this expansion of the Arabic lexicon, the *Nahda* commenced a period of linguistic enrichment that was comparable to the development of Arabic during the

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[104] Ibid, 99-102.
[105] Tibawi, 172.
[106] Ibid, 172-3.

rise of Islam and during the Abbasid period when Greek, Syriac, and Persian words were incorporated through translation.[107]

Bustani translated words from European languages into Arabic using the same types of neologisms as Tahtawi: arabicized foreign terms, rejuvenated classical Arabic words, and colloquialisms.[108] He was sensitive to the unconventional nature of his dictionary and he assured the reader that when he used a new term "he was careful to call attention to its nature in every case."[109] *Hurriyat al-damir* is one such neologism that Bustani likely coined in order to express the meaning of freedom of conscience.

Within the categories of neologisms, *hurriyat al-damir* represents a compound of two rejuvenated classical Arabic words, *hurriyah* (freedom) and *damir* (conscience). As discussed in the previous chapter, *hurriyah* was used traditionally in Arabic as the "negation of slavery" but its meaning was expanded by Tahtawi to reflect the political connotations of *liberté* and describe the positive "state in which an individual is able to engage or disengage in any action at any given time through his freewill and choice."[110] We can see this expanded meaning in Bustani's encyclopedia, *Da'irat al-ma'arif*, in which he defines several types of freedom (i.e. political and intellectual freedom) and argues that these freedoms constitute rights that the political system should afford to all citizens equally.[111]

Like *hurriyah*, the word *damir* also existed in classical Arabic. The classic Arabic dictionary, *Lissan al-Arab*, which was compiled in the 14th century, defines *damir*

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[107] Sawaie, 395-405.
[108] Tibawi, 172.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid, 137.

as the "thing that is kept secret" and what "remains hidden in the heart."[112] It is this basic definition of *damir* that was rejuvenated during the *Nahda*, and its meaning was expanded to approximate the English word 'conscience.' The existence of this expanded meaning can be found in *al-Munjid*, a dictionary of modern Arabic, which defines *damir* as the "inner strength to distinguish between good and evil."[113]

Within the context of Bustani's writing, we can see that the term *hurriyat al-damir* also takes on religious connotations. For Bustani, a more complete translation of *hurriyat al-damir* would encompass the freedom to believe or worship according to the guidance of one's conscience. These religious connotations are evident throughout *Qissat As'ad al-Shidyaq*, in which Bustani frames his argument for *hurriyat al-damir* using the story of As'ad al-Shidyaq's persecution. After presenting an account of As'ad's refusal to compromise his beliefs in the face of threats, Bustani writes:

> The above shows us enough to convince us of the purity of his intentions; the steadfastness of his resolution; the piety and alertness of his conscience; the dependability of his loyalty; his reliance on the word of God; the strength of his mind; and his willingness to sacrifice everything for the freedom of conscience and the love of his Lord. [114]

In 1826, As'ad al-Shidyaq ran away from the Saint George Monastery, where he had been detained by the Maronite church the previous year. After escaping, As'ad found shelter with American missionaries in Beirut. It was at this time that one of his uncles

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[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibn Manzur, Muhammad ibn Mukarram, *Lisan al-'Arab* (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1988) 162-163.
[113] Al-Munjid fi al-lughah al-'Arabiyah al-mu'asirah (Beirut: Dar al-Mashriq, 2000) 76.
[114] Butrus Al-Bustani, *Qissat As'ad al-Shidyaq: Bakurat Suriyah* (Beirut: American Mission Press, 1860), 39.

and two brothers found him in Beirut and pleaded with him to return to their home and to stop spreading his new religious beliefs. In Bustani's account of these events, As'ad replied: "Only grant me the freedom of conscience and I will go with you for my religion is all that I own so I must have freedom in it."[115]

Once again, we can see in the way that Bustani uses *hurriyat al-damir* that it could be translated as the 'freedom of religion,' or the 'freedom of belief,' in addition to 'freedom of conscience.' However, it represents a more individualistic sense of religious freedom than that of Tahtawi and Jabarti who were primarily concerned with the freedom of religious groups as corporate entities. Bustani, on the other hand, is defending the freedom of the individual to worship according to the dictates of her personal conscience. If necessary, this could even require an individual to leave a religious community as Bustani and As'ad al-Shidyaq did. As we saw in the first chapter, neither Jabarti or Tahtawi accepted the freedom of individuals, particularly Muslims, to abandon their faith.

BUSTANI'S VISION OF FREEDOM: A REFLECTION AND CRITIQUE OF MISSIONARY INFLUENCE

Bustani's use of the term *hurriyat al-damir* and the emphasis that he placed on the religious freedom of individuals reflects the influence of the American missionaries with whom he worked in Beirut for more than a decade following his conversion to Protestantism in 1840. After leaving the mission to become the dragoman of the U.S. consulate in 1851, Bustani maintained close friendships with several missionaries

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[115] Ibid, 40.

throughout the rest of his life. Bustani also participated in the Syrian Society of Arts and Science, which consisted of both Arab and American missionary members.[116] It is likely that Bustani first encountered the term 'freedom of conscience' through these interactions.

There are numerous examples of the missionaries' use of 'freedom of conscience' and 'liberty of conscience' in letters and diary entries that were published in the *Missionary Herald*, the official journal of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, which was based in Boston.[117] Many of these letters and diary entries were written before the publication of *Qissat As'ad al-Shidyaq*. For example, the *Missionary Herald* published a diary entry of Rev. William Thomson, who served as a missionary in Syria from 1834 until 1877.[118] In the summer of 1836, Thomson confronted the leaders of the village Brumannah, located in Mount Lebanon. In the following exchange, Thomson challenges the decision of the village leaders to obey orders from the Maronite Patriarch to burn Protestant books:

> Very well, you admit that the order was unjust and tyrannical, yet you obeyed it, and say you must obey it? "Yes, they replied, we are compelled to obey all his orders, though we know they are unrighteous. It is our duty to use the sword which God has put into our hands to support the true religion." "No sword, no church," was an expression often used by their chief speaker. This gave me a fine opportunity to preach liberty of conscience to ears that never heard it before, and under circumstances that compelled them to listen.[119]

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[116] Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven*, 194.
[117] Ibid, 145.
[118] Kamal Salibi and Yusuf Khoury, eds., *The Missionary Herald: Reports from Ottoman Syria, 1819-18170* (London: NABA, 1995), 5: 270.
[119] Kamal Salibi and Yusuf Khoury, eds., *The Missionary Herald: Reports from Ottoman Syria, 1819-1817* (London: NABA, 1995), 3: 96.

In the same diary entry, Thomson writes that he felt "it to be a great privilege to stand up before these haughty rules, and plead the case of religious liberty – liberty to have and to read the word of God, and worship him according to the dictates of their own conscience."[120] The language and the ideas that Thomson expresses in this passage are remarkably similar to the language Bustani uses in the conclusion of *Qissat As'ad al-Shidyaq*, in which he exhorts the reader to appreciate the sacrifice that As'ad made in securing the "freedom to worship God without opposition according to the word of the Holy Bible and the guidance of your conscience."[121]

In 1845, another missionary, Rev. George Whiting gives an account of events surrounding the persecution of Protestant converts from the village of Hasbeiyah whom were forced to flee their community. The missionaries in Beirut sent one of their "native brethren," Butrus al-Bustani, to accompany the converts back to their homes.[122] Whiting or another missionary was supposed to follow Bustani in order to continue their work in the village, but Bustani wrote to them upon his arrival in the village and warned them against this:

> I feel constrained to advise that no one of you should come at present. The Patriarch being here, and the people in an excited state, I fear it would be imprudent for one of you to be seen here, in the present juncture of affairs…no one who wears a *hat* had better be seen here until the Patriarch shall have gone, and things become more quiet.[123]

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[120] Ibid,, 97
[121] al-Bustani, *Qissat As'ad al-Shidyaq*, 66.
[122] *The Missionary Herald*, 3: 432-434.
[123] Ibid.

Whiting responded by writing disparagingly of the Greek Orthodox that they "dared not rest their cause upon truth and argument, but were determined to carry their point by force."[124] However, he found comfort in the knowledge that the Protestants would be protected by the governor of the area, Emir Khalil, "who was pledged to use his authority in favor of liberty of conscience."[125]

Bustani was not only exposed to the term 'freedom of conscience' by the missionaries but his personal motivation for advocating this freedom was also a result of their evangelical efforts and success in prompting his conversion to Protestantism. As a result of his conversion, Bustani faced intense opposition from the leaders of the Maronite church that he had abandoned. For two years following Bustani's conversion he remained within the protection of Eli Smith's home, where he was a virtual "prisoner, not venturing outside the gates, lest he be shot by spies of the Maronite patriarch."[126] In telling the story of As'ad Shidyaq, Bustani was in many ways telling his own story. They both came from prominent Maronite families. They both studied at the Maronite seminary 'Ayn Waraqa, where they were prepared for careers in the clergy. They both converted to Protestantism and faced the intense opposition of the Maronite church. The striking similarities between their backgrounds gave the missionaries cause to fear that "we shall perhaps have another Asaad affair."[127] Their fears were not realized because in the two decades that passed since As'ad al-Shidyaq's death, British power had expanded

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[124] Ibid, 3: 436.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Henry Jessup, *Fifty-three Years in Syria* (Reading: Garnett, 2002), 484.
[127] Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven*, 187-189.

to offer increased protection to Protestants.[128] In light of Bustani's conversion and the persecution that he faced afterward, it is clear that his advocacy of *hurriyat al-damir* must have been personally important to him and not simply the pursuit of an abstract ideal.

We have seen that the trajectory of Bustani's life was altered by his interactions with the missionaries in Beirut. In addition, the missionaries' influence on his thought is evident in his advocacy for the freedom of conscience. However, Bustani also demonstrated considerable independence from the missionaries in both his life and thought. As mentioned earlier, Bustani left his position as a teacher and translator with the mission in 1851 to become the first dragoman to the U.S. consulate. His motivation was at least partially financial as this change resulted in approximately a doubling of his previous annual salary of $300. He had also grown frustrated by his rebuffed requests to have his salary increased by the missionaries, most of whom earned at least twice his income.[129] This financial disparity was also symbolic of a larger concern that Bustani had with the missionaries' generally condescending attitude toward himself and other 'natives.'

In 1844, Bustani attended a meeting between the local Protestants and Rufus Anderson, an influential member of the mission board who was visiting from Boston. At this meeting Bustani "urged Anderson not to forget the small native congregation, but to write letters to them" and he told Anderson that "what gave his fellow Protestants hope was that others in distant lands prayed for them and that this direct tie to the outside

[128] Ibid, 189.
[129] Ibid, 193.

world was crucial for the sustenance of the congregation."[130] Anderson's response to Bustani stated that the "native brethren" should only communicate with the resident missionaries and could not have a direct connection with the mission board in America.[131] The message was clear that Bustani and other 'natives' should know their subordinate position in relation to the beneficent mission.

A similar attitude was expressed by Daniel Bliss, the founder of the Syrian Protestant College, which was to become the American University of Beirut. In a letter sent to the mission board, Bliss marveled that "when we look upon these brethren, and contrast them with the mass of the people, we are ready to exclaim, 'What hath God wrought;' for every man, woman and child in this land is a living, speaking, acting argument for the total depravity of the human heart, and these native brethren show forth the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit."[132] Yet despite the miraculous redemption of the 'natives,' Bliss believed they were merely "Babes in Christ, and that their opinions and feelings should not be too much regarded."[133] Another missionary, Rev. Edward Aiken, reported that the gospel was prevented from "having that success which had attended it in a neighboring part of this Empire" because there was "a lack of honesty and integrity, a slackness and indolence in all things and want of spiritual perception in this people, the remains of which are yet seen in the most hopeful cases of conversion, and in the most reliable of our church members."[134]

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[130] Ibid, 190-193.
[131] Ibid.
[132] *The Missionary Herald*, 4: 268.
[133] Ussama Makdisi, "Reclaiming the Land of the Bible," *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 3 (June 1997): 699.
[134] *The Missionary Herald*, 4: 296.

Despite his many years of service to the mission and his role as an elder in the local protestant community, this attitude of distrust was also directed at Bustani. Evidence of the missionaries' distrust of Bustani is found in a petition that they signed in 1857. The petition was sent to the American consul in Beirut who was preparing to depart for an extended leave of absence. The missionaries appealed to the consul to not hand over his authority to "any subject of the Sultan" and suggested that he appoint the British consul as his temporary replacement.[135] The purpose of this petition was likely to ensure that Bustani would not be selected, as he was the dragoman to the U.S. consul and the only eligible Ottoman subject. The missionaries' request for the British consul to be chosen was fulfilled, but his "oversight of the consulate was so nominal that Bustani was left in virtual control for over a year."[136]

Perhaps a more fundamental reason for Bustani's disassociation from the American missionaries was his increasing awareness that their constant pursuit of conversion and the establishment of a distinct Protestant community was not in the best interests of Syria.[137] Bustani believed that the missionaries were essentially working to create a new sectarian community within a society that was already fractured and vulnerable to sectarian violence.[138] In 1874, Bustani wrote an article that criticized the sectarian nature of the missionary schools. In response, Daniel Bliss wrote that Bustani was "a bad, bold man-a stumbling block," and a teacher at the Syrian Protestant College

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135 Tibawi, 167.
136 Ibid.
137 Fruma Zachs, "Toward a Proto-Nationalist Concept of Syria? Revisiting the American Presbyterian Missionaries in the Nineteenth-Century Levant," *Die Welt des Islams* 41, no. 2 (July 2001): 172-3.
138 Abu-Manneh, 289-90.

asserted that Bustani "must be assigned a place and be kept there and never be regarded as one whom we can fully trust in any particular."[139]

Similar criticism of the missionaries can found in *Qissat As'ad al-Shidyaq*. Bustani's account is a repudiation of the ways in which As'ad al-Shidyaq's story had been used by the Maronite authorities as well as the American missionaries to demonize each other. While the Maronites described the Americans as scheming heretics, the missionaries used Shidyaq's 'martyrdom' as an example of the evils of "genuine popery."[140] In the introduction, Bustani explains that the facts of Shidyaq's case had been presented by "his partisans or his detractors, both of whom have not had the opportunity to dwell on the truth."[141] He writes that the partisans of Shidyaq, which included the missionaries, inserted "false allegations and fabrications…into his chronicle which by their nature would severely castigate his persecutors, attributing to them actions they did not commit and ambitions they did not have." [142] Bustani did not accept the American missionaries' divisive portrayal and did not see Shidyaq's story as an opportunity to castigate the Maronite church. Instead, he saw the story of this young man who was unjustly persecuted as a moral lesson and an argument for the freedom of conscience.

Immediately following the publication of *Qissat As'ad al-Shidyaq*, Bustani's fear of inter-confessional violence was realized as civil war, primarily between Maronite

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[139] Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven*, 211.
[140] *The Missionary Herald*, 3: 96.
[141] Ibid, 199-200.
[142] Ibid.

Christians and Druze, broke out in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860.[143] This was not the first instance of sectarian violence that he had witnessed, but the intensity of the fighting in 1860 shocked Bustani and he became more ardently convinced of the need to build patriotic, rather than sectarian, bonds of solidarity among his compatriots.[144] In September of 1860, Bustani began to publish a series of patriotic *wataniyyat* (broad-sheets) that he titled *Nafir Suriyah* (Clarion of Syria).[145] He addressed each issue to his "fellow countrymen" and called on them to recognize the elements that unite rather than divide them as a people. [146] In the first publication of *Nafir Suriyah*, Bustani reminded his readers that "you drink the same water, breathe the same air, and speak the same language. The land upon which you walk, your common interests and your customs are one."[147]

Bustani also began to outline his vision of a political community that would grant equal rights to all citizens regardless of their religious affiliation. Citizens would have basic rights that the homeland would protect, and at the same time, citizens would give their loyalty to the homeland. In the fourth issue of *Nafir Suriyahh*, published on October 25, 1860, Bustani wrote that *hurriyat al-damir* was an important "civil and religious right, which many countrymen have entered martyrdom for."[148] If Syria was to progress and catch up to European civilization, then it needed to clearly divide the realms of

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143 Stephen Sheehi, "Inscribing the Arab Self: Butrus al-Bustani and Paradigms of Subjective Reform," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 27, no. 1 (May 2000): 7-8.
144 Abu-Manneh, 293.
145 Sheehi, 8-9
146 Abu-Manneh, 293.
147 Ibid.
148 Butrus Al-Bustani, *Nafir Suriyah* (1860; repr., Beirut: Dar Fikr lil-Abhath wal-Nashr, 1990), 22.

religious and secular authority.[149] The mixture of religion and politics was contrary to *Ruh al-'Asr* (The Spirit of the Age), which Bustani identified with the French Revolution.[150] Bustani called for a division between secular authority and religious authority so that the secular authority would be able to protect the freedom of all citizens regardless of their religious beliefs.

In nineteenth century Ottoman Syria, Bustani believed that the best authority to defend the civil and religious rights of his compatriots was located in Istanbul. The Ottomans won his loyalty with the reform edict of 1856, which guaranteed the "equal treatment of all subjects regardless of religious affiliation."[151] Bustani saw in this reform the opportunity for Muslims and non-Muslims to integrate into a larger political community. It also offered the environment in which sectarian divisions could gradually give way to the bonds of patriotism. Bustani supported both Ottoman legitimacy and Arab patriotism with the hope that the horrific events of 1860 would never be repeated.[152]

Bustani not only encouraged the spirit of non-sectarian patriotism in his writing but he also took practical steps towards this goal. In 1862, he established the first non-sectarian school in Syria, which he named *al-Madrasah al-Wataniyyah* (the National School).[153] The Maronite, Greek Catholic, and Orthodox churches had all opened schools to provide the sort of modern education that the missionary schools provided, but up until that point none took the secular approach of Bustani's National School.[154] The

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[149] Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven*, 207.
[150] Abu-Manneh, 296-9.
[151] Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven*, 185.
[152] Abu-Manneh, 300.
[153] Tibawi, 171-172.
[154] Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven*, 209.

American missionaries did not approve of Bustani's school because it did not require that all students attend Protestant worship services. Instead, Bustani organized his school to accommodate faiths of all students. Bustani wrote the following description of his school's policy:

> The National School accepts students from all sects and races without interfering with their religious affiliation or asking them to follow a religious allegiance other than their parents' religious allegiance. It also gives them the opportunity to practice their religious beliefs in the School with teachers from that religious allegiance. They are also allowed to attend, under supervision, their religious places of worship at the required time.[155]

In addition to its inclusion of students from all religious backgrounds, the National School also provided students with an education that valued their Arab culture and language. While many languages were taught at Bustani's school, instruction in Arabic was emphasized.[156] Bustani believed that it was important to encourage the study of Arabic as language is the foundation of national identity. He argued that "Syria must not become a Babel of languages… as it is a Babel of religions and sects."[157] This approach contrasted dramatically with the foreign schools that taught students "about remote countries but nothing about their own."[158] Whereas, Rufus Anderson boasted of "denationalizing" the natives, Bustani worked to build a new generation of Syrians who were bound to each other by their love for the homeland.[159]

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[155] Raffoul, Appendix 5.
[156] Abu-Manneh, 290-1.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven*, 209.

CONCLUSION

Following Butrus al-Bustani's death on May 1, 1883, the Papal Greek Patriarch of Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem, sent a letter to Bustani's son, Salim, in which he wrote that "the whole nation mourns your father's death. Literature, education, learning, and every good cause laments his departure."[160] It is remarkable that these words were written in honor of a man who at a young age faced persecution and even feared for his life because he had disturbed the traditions and religious hierarchies of Mt. Lebanon. It is also a testament to Bustani's development from a young convert who faithfully assisted the foreign missionaries to a mature intellectual leader who was well respected by his compatriots of all religious backgrounds. Bustani demonstrated an appreciation for certain aspects of the missionaries' message but also the ability to evaluate their influence critically. He embraced the freedom of conscience as a defense of the rights of individuals to worship and believe as they choose. Yet he was also aware that the missionaries evoked this concept in order to defend their particular interests and not the interests of local Protestant converts or Syrian society as a whole.

While the missionaries vehemently condemned the different beliefs of other religious groups, Bustani called on Syrians to focus on their similarities rather than their differences. While the missionaries used education to spread the Protestant faith, Bustani established the National School to teach students of all religious backgrounds to respect and tolerate other faiths. While the missionaries opposed secularism in both their homeland and in the Ottoman Empire, Bustani ardently called for the establishment of a secular government that could offer a path out of the horrific sectarian violence that Syria

experienced in 1860. According to Ussama Makdisi these contrasts between Bustani and the American missionaries in Syria should lead to a reevaluation of the missionaries' legacy in modern Arab history:

> That his [Bustani's] plea for a secular liberalism was far in advance of his missionary peers should make us reconsider the traditional missionary narrative which moves seamlessly from evangelism to secularism, and even more tendentiously claims modernity to be its own unique heritage – something fixed, that can be bestowed by American charity or rejected by Arab folly, something evident in one location but not quite so in another.[161]

Instead of viewing liberalism or modernity as a fixed object that was adopted by Arab intellectuals based on "some mythical Western original," Makdisi argues that it is more accurate to view Arab liberalism as the result of a "dialectical interaction between various American and Ottoman Arab currents."[162] We have seen evidence of this dialectic process in Bustani's coining of the term *hurriyat al-damir*, which builds upon Jabarti's expansion of the meaning of *hurriyah* while also reflecting the influence of the missionaries who likely introduced Bustani to its English equivalent, freedom of conscience. Furthermore, Bustani's view that a secular government would be the best protector of freedom is more closely aligned with the thought of French revolutionaries than American missionaries, whose differences expose the lack of a single Western understanding of freedom. In the same way that there is no monolithic Western conception of freedom, Arab intellectuals also did not always agree on the meaning or

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[160] Jessup, 485-6.
[161] Ussama Makdisi, "The Question of American Liberalism and the Origins of the American Board Mission to the Levant and its Historiography," in *Liberal Thought in the Eastern Mediterranean: Late 19th Century until the 1960s*, ed. Christoph Schumann (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 27
[162] Ibid, 25.

implications of this concept. The next chapter will explore how two Syrian writers from the generation after Bustani shared similar understandings of what freedom means yet drew very different conclusions as to the source of freedom and how it ought to be best protected.

Chapter III

Rashid Rida and Farah Antun:

Stability and Flexibility in the Semantic Field of Freedom

> *It is the right of the scholars, rational individuals, writers and speakers to state what they wish of Christian spiritual authority…. They have the right to say that were it not separated from civil authority, we would not have smelled the breath of freedom. They have the right to excuse the French nation, since it attempted to uproot this authority entirely. The Muslim excuses them in all of this, as it is the practice that Islam brought...163*

On December 3, 1897, two young friends from the Syrian city of Tripoli, Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865-1935) and Farah Antun (1874-1922), boarded an Austrian ship together bound for Alexandria, Egypt.[164] They were joining a wave of immigration that during the second half of the nineteenth century carried large numbers of their compatriots to foreign shores. While some journeyed as far as the Americas in search of greater economic opportunity, others were attracted to Egypt, which was closer geographically and culturally to their homeland. A large community of primarily Christian Syrian merchants developed in the port city of Alexandria alongside Greeks, Italians, and other Europeans who enjoyed the advantages and privileges afforded to them by the Capitulations. Following the British occupation of Egypt in 1882, there was also demand within the bureaucracy for the language skills of Syrian professionals, many

163 Muhammad Rashid Rida, *The Criticisms of the Christians and the Proofs of Islam*, trans. Simon A. Wood (1905; repr., Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2008), 192.

of whom were graduates of the American Protestant or French Jesuit missionary schools.[165] Egypt also attracted large numbers of Syrian journalists and intellectuals who found it increasingly difficult to work under the draconian censorship laws of the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II (1842-1918). The press laws in Egypt under Lord Cromer (1841-1917), the British Consul-General, were relatively relaxed and there existed patrons and a reading public ample enough to financially sustain publications.[166] These conditions prompted many Syrian journalists to either move their operations or establish new journals in Egypt. The press had become an influential means of expressing cultural and political ideas so this shift from Syria to Egypt as the center of journalism was accompanied by a similar shift in the locus of Arab intellectual life. Although the geographic center shifted, Syrians remained disproportionately influential in this field for some time. Until World War I, the most widely read periodicals in Egypt, such as *al-Muqtataf* and *al-Hilal*, as well as daily newspapers, such as *al-Ahram* and *al-Muqattam*, were run by Syrians.[167]

Rida and Antun were both aspiring journalists and they had not been in Egypt long before they each established a new journal. Rida settled in Cairo where he began publishing *al-Manar al-Islami* (The Islamic Lighthouse) in 1898, less than a year after his arrival. Antun, on the other hand, settled in Alexandria where he worked for *al-Ahram*

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[164] Umar Ryad, *Islamic Reformism and Christianity : A Critical Reading of the Works of Muhammad Rashid Rida and His Associates, 1898-1935* (n.p.: Brill, 2009), 71-2.
[165] Thomas Phillip, *The Syrians in Egypt* (Stuttgart: Steiner-Verlag-Wiesbaden-GmbH, 1985), 99.
[166] Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 245-6.
[167] Phillip, 96-8.

before founding *al-Jami'ah al-Uthmaniyyah* (The Ottoman League) in 1899.[168] The content of these two journals reflected the large extent to which the seminal concepts of nineteenth century Europe – such as civilization, progress, and freedom – had been adopted as standards of judgement by Arab intellectuals. Similarly, they both used their publications to advocate for reform, which itself had become an ubiqituous term in the Arabic press. However, as hinted at by the titles of their journals, Rida and Antun constructed their visions of reform within two different frameworks, that of Islam and the Ottoman Empire. The first section of this chapter will explore in more depth the differences between their intellectual orientations and visions of reform. The second section will than examine how these two writers used the concept of freedom within their different intellectual frameworks. Did Rida and Antun significantly adjust the meaning of freedom to fit their different visions of reform or did the concept remain semantically constant?

COMPETING VISIONS OF REFORM AND THE PATH OF PROGRESS

Antun and Rida received early introductions to the contemporary ideas of Europe during their secondary educations. They both studied in schools with the 'modern' curriculum that included instruction in the natural sciences of Europe and foreign languages. This type of curriculum, which was first introduced to Syria by American Protestant and French Jesuit missionaries, quickly became the new standard of education and the gateway to careers in the Ottoman bureaucracy, trade, and new professions such as journalism. Ultimately, local religious communities were forced to adopt similar

[168] Donald M. Reid, *The Odyssey of Farah Antun* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1975), 39-40, and

curriculums in order to compete with the missionary schools. Antun and Rida were among the first students to attend 'modern' schools that were not run by missionaries.

In 1888, at age 13, Antun was sent by his Orthodox Christian parents to complete his secondary education at an Orthodox school in the hills above Tripoli at the monastery of Kiftin. The Orthodox Church had established the school at Kiftin only six or seven years earlier but it had already gained a strong reputation.[169] Rida, who came from a devout Sunni family that claimed descendency from the Prophet Muhammad, studied at the National Islamic School of Tripoli after completing his early education at a local Quranic school, or *kuttab*.[170][171] In these 'modern' schools, Antun and Rida both studied mathematics, history, geography, the natural sciences, and French.

Despite these similarities in Rida and Antun's educations, some significant differences existed. The National Islamic School, as its name suggests, provided an Islamic religious education and Rida's fellow students were all Muslims. The school at Kiftin, on the other hand, resembled Butrus al-Bustani's National School in that it welcomed students from all confessional backgrounds and accommodated their various traditions although it was operated by the Orthodox Church. Antun would later recall the religious tolerance of his former school with admiration:

> Kiftin in its early days was a school which brought together all the sects of Syria. There were Muslim, Maronite, and Orthodox students in it, and all were agreed on cooperation and harmony…. There were Orthodox, Maronite, and Protestant teachers in the school and a Muslim teacher as well…. On Sunday the Orthodox

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Encyclopedia of Islam, s.v. "Abduh, Muhammad," by Anke von Kügelgen.
[169] Reid, 13.
[170] Ryad, 3.
[171] Simon A. Wood, *Christian Criticisms, Islamic Proofs: Rashid Ridas Modernist Defense of Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2008), 24

> pupils would go to the church at the school, the Maronite pupils would leave with their Maronite teachers for the church of a nearby Maronite village known as "new America," and the Muslim students would join their sheikh. During Ramadan a special table was sometimes put out on the terrace of the school for the sheikh and the Muslim students; they would wait for the sun to set, and then break their fast. During the four years we spent at Kiftin, we do not recall that any religious dispute ever arose. There was no estrangement of people for religious reasons. The instruction in Christianity was optional, not compulsory, and the Orthodox were the only ones who studied the Orthodox religion….[172]

Perhaps this depiction of the school at Kiftin is overly idyllic, but even if this is the case it is still informative because it reveals what Antun considered to be the model for modern education. He believed that schools were one of the primary means of fostering unity among religious groups and loyalty to their common homeland, and therefore, they must include students from all religious backgrounds and accommodate the various religious traditions represented.[173] Rida also ascribed to the presupposition that education was an important foundation for the unity of a community. However, he was primarily concerned with the unity of the Muslim community and therefore believed that Islamic schools, such as the one he attended, were essential for maintaining the integrity of the community. He believed that state schools should teach the religion of the majority religious group and warned against attempts to introduce instruction in the religions of minority groups as this could open the flood gates to demands for inclusion from every religious denomination and Islamic school of law.[174]

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[172] Reid, 14-15.
[173] Farah Antun, "al-Akha' wa al-Hurriyah," *al-Jami'ah al-Uthmaniyyah* 1, no. 3 (April 1899)
[174] Ryad, 112.

The National Islamic School of Tripoli was established by a well-known Islamic scholar, Shaykh Husayn al-Jisr (1845-1909).[175] Husayn al-Jisr was an early Muslim reformer who showed concern for "a blend of ancient and modern learning, for an acceptance of the modern world which would not destroy the convictions and values of Islam."[176] This is reflected in an important exposition of Islamic doctrine that he wrote, *al-Risala al-Hamidiyya*, in which he argued that the theory of Darwinism did not contradict the Quran.[177] He sought to achieve this blend in his school by supplementing the modern sciences with instruction in the Islamic sciences.[178] After completing his studies, Rida received a diploma (*'ijaza*) from Husayn al-Jisr authorizing him to teach religious knowledge.[179]

Another important difference between Rida and Antun's educations was in the level of proficiency they developed in French. As mentioned previously, both of their schools provided instruction in the French language. However, Antun attained much greater fluency in French than Rida. This could have resulted from a disparity in the quality of language instruction they received, but Antun and Rida also demonstrated very different levels of interest in the French language. At a young age, Antun became enamored with the French language and literature and would frequently stay up until late into the evening reading French novels.[180] Rida, on the other hand, demonstrated a relative lack of interest in the French language and even viewed those who mastered

[175] Wood, 24.
[176] Hourani, 222.
[177] Wood, 24.
[178] Ryad, 3.
[179] Ibid.

European languages with a degree of suspicion. In the context of an article in *al-Manar* on religious extremism in Europe, for instance, Rida suggested that when some of the Syrian newspaper editors learned the languages and literature of Europe they also adopted the intolerance of Europe.[181] A consequence of Rida's limited knowledge of French was that he encountered French literature and the ideas contained in it indirectly through Arabic translations. Meanwhile, Antun was able to delve directly into the works of French philosophers, whose ideas he readily accepted. In contrast, Antun's interest in and knowledge of Arabic literature was relatively weak when compared to Rida, who mastered the sciences of the Arabic language, an important component of an Islamic education.[182] Rida's education at the Islamic National School prepared him to enthusiastically accept the ideas of the Islamist reform movement and specifically those of its most prominent leaders, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-97) and his disciple Muhammad 'Abdu (1849-1905). These two thinkers assumed the same basic project of Husayn al-Jisr of demonstrating the compatibility of Islam and the dominant ideas of Europe. Yet al-Afghani and 'Abdu were bolder and more revolutionary in that they called for a fundamental reevaluation of Islamic tradition. 'Abdu, for example, argued that the tradition, or *sunna*, of the Prophet had been distorted by the mentality of blind imitation (*taqlid*). This led to the decline of Islamic civilization, the strength of which could only be restored if Muslims rediscovered the uncorrupted traditions of Islam

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[180] Ra'if Khuri, *Modern Arab Thought: Channels of the French Revolution to the Arab East*, ed. Charles Issawi, trans. Ihsan 'Abbas (1943; repr., Princeton: The Kingston Press, 1983), 172.
[181] *al-Manar* 12, no. 7 (1909), 499.
[182] Hourani, 224, and Reid, 13-14.

through the use of rational investigation (*ijtihad*). In this way, Muslims would be harnessing the rationality that fueled the success of Western civilizaton.[183]

Rida first encountered al-Afghani and 'Abdu's ideas in 1884-5 when he heard articles read aloud from the journal, *al-Urwa al-Wuthqa* (The Strongest Bond), which al-Afghani and 'Abdu founded in Paris along with a secret society of the same name.[184] However, it was not until 1892-3 that Rida read a complete set of this journal. The experience was transformative, as he would later describe:

> I found several copies of the journal among my father's papers, and every number was like an electric current striking me, giving my soul a shock, or setting it ablaze and carrying me from one state to another…. My own experience and that of others, and history, have taught me that no other Arabic discourse in this age or the centuries which preceded it has done what it did in the way of touching the seat of emotion in the heart and persuasion in the mind.[185]

Rida was so inspired by the reformist message of *al-Urwa al-Wuthqa* that he wrote to al-Afghani expressing interest in studying under him, but al-Afghani died before they could meet. Yet Rida had the opportunity to meet 'Abdu in Tripoli on more than one occasion, and as soon as he arrived in Egypt he joined 'Abdu's circle of disciples.[186] From this point forward Rida remained intensely devoted to his master, writing 'Abdu's biography and publishing a modernist commentary of the Quran*, Tafsir al-Manar*, the first volumes of which were based on 'Abdu's lectures and writings.[187] He largely remained faithful to his master's ideas, choosing to expand rather than drastically alter

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[183] Yoav Di-Capua, *Gatekeepers of the Arab Past: Historians and History Writing in Twentieth-Century Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 23-4.
[184] *Encyclopedia of Islam*, s.v. "Abduh, Muhammad," by Anke von Kügelgen,
[185] Hourani, 226.
[186] Wood, 25.
[187] Hourani, 226-7.

them. Further, Rida embraced 'Abdu and al-Afghani's call to reform in the name of reviving the strength and vitality of Islamic civilization. He believed that true reform comes from a return to the pure traditions of Islam and not mere imitation of Europe.[188] He wrote, for example, that "Islam came to bring reform on earth, and all that opposes reform is corruption whose elimination is enjoined."[189]

Antun left a description of a transformative experience in his intellectual development that is strikingly similar to Rida's account of first reading *al-Urwa al-Wuthqa*. Perhaps it is not surprising considering Antun's love of the French language that he found his inspiration in the corpus of French rather than Arabic literature. As a young man he was particularly captivated by Alexandre Dumas' historical novel about the French Revolution, *Ange Pitou*, which he would read until three or four in the morning before returning it to a small box that he kept hidden in a hole in the garden, safe from the searches of government officials.[190] He would later recall that "the expressions of Dumas, in his novel, were like the lightning that flashes and tears through the skies of thought or like whips that beat the ears and awaken wills and minds."[191] The impact of the novel was heightened for Antun because of the direct parallels he saw between the repressive conditions in the Ottoman Empire under Abdul Hamid II and those of pre-revolutionary France.[192] Seeing that they shared the same political problems, Antun concluded that the prescriptions of the French revolutionaries should also apply to the

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[188] Hourani, 230.
[189] Muhammad Rashid Rida, *The Criticisms of the Christians and the Proofs of Islam*, trans. Simon A. Wood (1905; repr., Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2008), 200.
[190] Reid, 13-14.
[191] Khuri, 172.
[192] Khuri, 172.

Ottoman Empire. Antun whole heartedly embraced the political formulas and maxims of the French revolution and believed that their introduction to the Ottoman provinces would similarly usher in the freedom and equality that the French enjoyed. It was with this objective that Antun translated Dumas' novel into Arabic and published it in serialized form in *al-Jami'ah* and then as a separate book. In his introduction to the translation, Antun explained his main motivation for undertaking the project:

> [T]o kindle the imagination of the sons of the East with this novel as my imagination was kindled by it in my early youth. It seemed to me that by translating it into Arabic during that total silence and indolence I would be opening, in that old building, windows that look out on the sky of liberty to let in its light and air and erect for its readers an exemplary model, whose head soars high in the blue sky and whose base soaks in blood.[193]

It is significant that Antun's intended audience is the 'sons of the East.' The 'old building,' which he intends to open to the rejuvenating force of liberty is Eastern civilization. Unlike Rida, he is not interested in the reform of any particular religion or religious community and, as will be discussed later, he believed that religion must be completely removed from the sphere of politics. The embodiment of Eastern civilization and the specific object of reform for Antun was the Ottoman Empire. In his introduction to the first issue of *al-Jami'ah al-Uthmaniyya*, Antun wrote that one of the most important objectives of the journal was to serve the Ottoman and Egyptian homeland (*watan*). He also emphasized that the magazine would pursue this goal with contributions from both "our Muslim and Christian brothers."[194] In this way, Antun's

[193] Khuri, 173.
[194] Farah Antun, "al-Muqadima," *al-Jami'ah al-Uthmaniyyah* 1, no. 1 (March 1899).

vision of reform allowed for the inclusion of all religious communities based on their common loyalty to the Ottoman homeland.

In contrast, Rida explicitly identified *al-Manar* as a magazine that defended the interests of Muslims, writing that "Muslims make up more than 90% of Egypt but the only religious journal or confessional magazine that they have is *al-Manar*."[195] Interestingly, in this period of increased mobility made possible by new technologies such as the steam engine, Antun and Rida addressed their calls for reform to communities that extended beyond any specific geographic area. Antun, for example, advertised journal subscriptions to "all segments of the Ottoman homeland in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Anatolia, America, and in every place where Ottomans reside."[196] Likewise, Rida published articles and questions in *al-Manar* from Muslim readers in India, South America and elsewhere.

Antun successfully sparked the imagination of at least one 'son of the East.' Salama Musa, an Egyptian Copt who would become an important intellectual in his own right, wrote in his autobiography that *al-Jami'ah* "was like an explosion. It generated light and energy and power. It enlightened our minds, and it motivated our first gropings towards a new society, efforts modeled after those of the French writers of the late eighteenth century. Farah Anton [sic] was fully aware that we felt the need for a fresh start, for new lines of development. To this he stimulated us by translating the story of the French revolution by Alexandre Dumas."[197] Musa apparently did not find this same energy and inspiration in Arabic literature. He wrote that "Arabic literature as we knew it

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[195] *al-Manar* 5, no. 6 (1903), 795.
[196] Farah Antun, "al-Muqadima," *al-Jami'ah al-Uthmaniyyah* 1, no. 1 (March 1899).

then reflected complete submission to established powers and traditions and beliefs; on the other hand, European literature, and more particularly the French as it was transmitted to us in Farah Anton's translation, was the literature of rebellion and revolt…."[198]

The view that French literature was an active and dynamic force, with the power to awaken a supposedly passive and declining East is also evident in Antun's statement quoted above that his translation of Dumas' novel would break the 'silence and indolence' of the East. Antun ascribed to the same historical narrative as Rida that the flame of knowledge and progress had passed from Eastern/Islamic civilization to Western civilization. However, unlike Rida, he did not believe that the renaissance of the East required a return to some original source that once made it great. Instead, he believed that Easterners must be willing to learn and fully embrace the ideas of Europe. For example, he suggested that it might take fifty or even a hundred years of borrowing from Europe before the East would be prepared to make original contributions to the sciences, history, and other fields.[199]

Antun certainly made a significant contribution to the effort of translating European literature, particularly French literature, into Arabic. In the pages of *al-Jami'ah*, he published numerous translations of works by eighteenth and nineteenth century French writers, including romantics such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and those of the secular, rationalist tradition, such as Ernest Renan and Jules Simon.[200] The prominent role that French literature would play in *al-Jami'ah* is clearly evident on the original

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[197] Education of Salama Musa 39-40
[198] Salama Musa, *The Education of Salama Musa*, trans. L.O. Schuman (Leiden: Brill, 1961), 38-9.
[199] Reid, 66.

masthead of the journal. The title of the journal is flanked by two slogans, "God and homeland" and "Unity and Progress." Beneath this are two quotes, both by French writers; one by Simon stating that it is the responsibility of schools to teach morals and virtues and another by Rousseau arguing that women should be taught what greatness and virtue are so that they can raise great and virtuous men.[201] Similarly, the first article that Antun published, "True Reform: the Objective of this Magazine," was largely a summary of Jules Simon's argument that the moral reform of individuals, beginning with reform of child rearing and education, must precede political reform in order to prepare a nation for the responsibility of political freedom.[202]

Antun's emphasis on the translation and distribution of European literature did not preclude him from recognizing and appreciating the heritage of the East. In fact, he wrote that "the renaissance (*nahda*) of the East after its collapse is still in its painful infancy because until now no department has been established for either the translation of the precious works of European literature or for the revival of the old Arabic books."[203] While Antun saw value in the translation of both European and classic Arabic literature, it is clear from the body of Antun's work that the former was significantly more important to him. There exists a clear sense in Antun's thought that Europe had surpassed and superseded the previous accomplishments of the East. In the following description of an important site of the French Revolution, Place de la Bastille, which

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[200] Ibid., 66-7.
[201] Farah Antun, "al-Muqadima," *al-Jami'ah al-Uthmaniyyah* 1, no. 1 (March 1899).
[202] Farah Antun, "al-Islah al-Haqiqi," *al-Jami'ah al-Uthmaniyyah* 1, no. 1 (March 1899).
[203] Farah Antun, *Ibn Rushd wa Falsafatahu* (1903; repr., Beirut: Dar al-Farabi, 1988),133.

Antun visited in Paris, he goes as far as to characterize the liberal ideas of the revolution in divine terms:

> Here God's light glowed for the first time on earth, illuminated the road for the nations and opened for them the ways that were hitherto blocked… here a new message descended to the people like that of Ahmad [Muhammad the Prophet], protected by a sharp sword like his; here was the second manger of Bethlehem in which the second Messiah was born, but he was baptized with fire, sword and blood not with the water of Jordan; and here God revealed His glory more conspicuously than he did on Mount Sinai or in the Burning Bush of Moses.[204]

Rida would have vehemently rejected this notion that the modern ideas of Europe in any way surpassed the message of Islam, the ultimate and final revelation. After all, Rida believed that Europe had learned many of the ideas that made it successful from Muslims when Islamic civilization was still thriving. On the basis of this understanding, Rida worked to connect many modern European concepts with their Islamic archetype. In doing this he continued the process begun by his predecessors, such as Tahtawi, al-Afghani, and 'Abdu, who, for instance, equated parliamentary democracy with *shura,* and public opinion with *ijma'*.[205]

FREEDOM AS AN IDEAL AND PRACTICE

Rida and Antun maintained their friendship during their first few years in Egypt despite the distance between their homes in Cairo and Alexandria. Antun would occasionally help Rida with the translation of French materials for *al-Manar*. Rida recommended Antun's journal to 'Abdu and also reviewed it favorably in *al-Manar.*[206]

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[204] Khuri,174.
[205] Hourani, 144.
[206] Ryad, 72.

However, it was inevitable that their very different visions of reform would bring them into conflict, which occurred in the spring of 1902 when Antun published an article on the life and work of the Andalusian philosopher Ibn Rushd (1126-98), who was also known as Averroes in European literature. Antun had been introduced to this subject by a book written half a century earlier by the French writer Ernest Renan (1823-92), *Averroes et l'averroisme*.[207] Following Renan's lead, Antun presented the divergent receptions that Ibn Rushd received in the East and West respectively as a historic turning point in the fate of each civilization. In their view, the reign of religious orthodoxy in the East had suppressed the rational philosophy of Ibn Rushd and other free thinkers, which facilitated that civilization's decline. Europeans on the other hand embraced the rationalism of Ibn Rushd, from whom they relearned Aristotelian philosophy, and this contributed to the flourishing of the sciences and subsequently Western civilization as a whole.[208] Antun did not directly argue that Christianity was more tolerant than Islam; however, he implied as much, stating that tolerance is more difficult in the path of Islam, because Islam inherently combines the religious and temporal authorities which then allows religious authorities to restrict the freedom of individuals based on their specific beliefs.[209]

This insinuation infuriated Rida who turned to 'Abdu and requested that he defend Islam. 'Abdu, who had by that time become the Grand Mufti of Egypt, agreed to

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[207] Reid, ix.
[208] Anke von Kugelgen, "A Call for Rationalism: 'Arab Averroists' in the Twentieth Century," *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 16 (1996):101.
[209] Farah Antun, *Ibn Rushd wa Falsafatahu*, 212-4.

Rida's request and wrote the first of several articles refuting Antun's claims.[210] Antun published each of 'Abdu's articles along with his own responses in *al-Jami'ah* and later as a separate book *Ibn Rushd wa falsafatuhu* (Ibn Rushd and his Philosophy). Rida did not defer entirely to his mentor, writing several articles in *al-Manar* that took on a more personal tone, accusing Antun of conspiring with Christian missionaries to weaken the faith of Muslims. Rida wrote, for example, that when "*al-Jamiah*'s editor saw that the evangelists' planting of doubts through Christianity did not succeed with the Muslims with the religious method, he, like them, embarked upon planting doubts with the scientific method."[211] In fact, Rida considered Antun's approach to be more dangerous than that of the missionaries:

> I do not fear from the missionaries that the Muslim will become a Christian. Rather, I fear that he will [be led to] doubt the fundamental essence of religion and become a libertine…. These zealots did not stop at attacking [Islam] in books, newspapers and religious periodicals. They even spat out the poison of their hostility in the political and academic newspapers, one alleging that Islam is the enemy of reason and religion, and another claiming that its politics harms all people.[212]

Antun responded in kind suggesting that Rida was not qualified to enter the debate and should leave the matter to his more competent mentor, 'Abdu.[213] Likely in reference to Rida, Antun also stated in the introduction to *Ibn Rushd wa falsafatuhu* that he did not write the book for those who are close-minded and have no aim except to shout and scream and they should not read it. He wrote that such people should mind

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[210] Ryad, 72-3.
[211] Farah Antun, *Ibn Rushd wa Falsafatahu*, 155.
[212] Rida, *The Criticisms of the Christians and the Proofs of Islam*, 69.
[213] Reid, 87.

their own affairs and leave *al-Jami'ah* to its affairs because they are in two separate valleys divided by a mountain.[214] This is a metaphor for the division between religion and worldly affairs, such as science and philosophy. Antun makes clear that the subject of his book is philosophical rather than religious. Addressing the divisive topic of religion would "neither concern nor benefit us" whereas "science, philosophy, and literature – like air, land, and water – are shared by all people."[215] Antun is therefore suggesting that Rida, as someone concerned primarily with religion, is wrong to attempt to enter the realm of philosophy, in which he does not belong.

Contrary to Antun's claim that the differences between him and Rida were inherently unbridgeable, and despite the personal animosity that developed between them, these two writers actually held many of the same assumptions and intellectual tools in common. As discussed earlier, they both accepted the view that the Eastern/Islamic civilization was in decline and reform was necessary to halt and reverse this decline. During the Ibn Rushd debate, Antun and Rida both presented their comprehensive visions of how reform and progress ought to be achieved. We have seen that they were committed to the reform of different imagined communities – Ottoman and Islamic – and claimed different sources of reform – the West and Islam. Yet they agreed on the fundamental components of reform and modernity, such as reason, tolerance, and freedom. Rida and Antun adapted these concepts slightly to fit their different visions of reform yet they agreed on the fundamental meanings and importance of the concepts. This is apparent in the ways they approached the concept of freedom.

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[214] Farah Antun, *Ibn Rushd wa Falsafatahu*, 50.
[215] Ibid, 49.

For Antun, one of the most important requirements for freedom is the separation of religious and political authorities. He argues that religious leaders are committed to promoting their particular beliefs, and if given the power to govern, would use that power to persecute those who do not agree with them. Civil authorities, on the other hand, would defend the freedom of all people equally based on the constitution.[216] Antun was not only opposed to the influence of religious authorities in the political realm but also within religious communities as well.[217] He did not adopt the same harshly satirical tone as Ahmad Faris Shidyaq, but he held similarly anti-clerical views, accusing religious leaders of abandoning the principles of Christianity in their self-serving pursuit of power and prestige. By enforcing adherence to a particular dogma, the clergy limit their followers' freedom of thought and use of reason. Antun emphasized that the persecution endured by scientists and philosophers at the hands of Christian and Muslim leaders was not in defense of religion but rather religious traditions.[218] Antun believed that after stripping away these inessential traditions, one would find that all religions share the same core principles, which effectively constitute one universal religion.[219]

It would seem likely that Rida would reject outright Antun's presupposition that freedom requires the separation of religious and political authorities. Instead, Rida embraced the essence of this argument. He writes that "if a Christian states: religious authority is the agitator of reprehensible fanaticism, the birthplace of hatred and enmity between neighbors and friends, the obstacle preventing equality of rights between people

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[216] Hourani, 256.
[217] Wood, 70-4.
[218] Farah Antun, *Ibn Rushd wa Falsafatahu*, 214.
[219] Hourani, 255-6.

of the same nationality, the shackles through which will and power are suppressed and the fetters through which reason and thought are restrained, the Muslim would agree to it and not dispute it."[220] However, Rida claims that this same statement does not apply to the Muslim community for the simple reason that Islam does not permit Muslim leaders any authority comparable to that of Christian clergies. For this reason, Rida continues, the Muslim would agree to the above statement "thanking God Almighty that his own religion lacks a faction to whom Islam granted the right of controlling minds and spirits, setting down for them what it wills and forbidding them what it will and dealing with the Muslims – in the name of religion – as it wills."[221] In Islam, believers retain their freedom of thought, whereas in Christianity no "statement may be made on religion but that of the priest, and it is not required that his statement be rational or comprehensible!"[222]

This is not to say that Rida rejected all forms of leadership in the Muslim community. Indeed, he stated that it is necessary to have leaders in Islam in order to maintain order. However, Muslim leaders primarily serve as teachers and guides to those who willingly choose to follow them. Even the Prophet Muhammad was merely a conveyer (*muballigh*) of revelation "rather than a controller, steward, or enforcer over the people."[223] After the death of the prophet, the caliph became the leader of the community but "he is not a controller over the people in their religion or an independent agent in setting down legal rulings for them. He is only a guardian of order and an executor of

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[220] Rida, *The Criticisms of the Christians and the Proofs of Islam*, 191.
[221] Ibid.
[222] Ibid.
[223] Ibid, 195-6.

rulings… Islam obligates him to act in accordance with the shari'ah, and forbids him from legislating his own [laws]."[224]

The caliph and other Muslim leaders do not have the power to restrict the freedom of others beyond that which the shari'ah requires. Therefore, "it may be correctly stated that civil authority in Islam derives from the religion, or that civil authority is religious authority" but "it would be incorrect to compare it to religious authority as it is known to non-Muslims, or to represent its guardian as a combiner of two forms of authority, the one over spirits and minds, the other over bodies and actions."[225] After all, "it is Islam that invalidated every authority that would enable a faction to become a sovereign over another faction's spirit and a controller of its freedom in anything beyond that which the revealed law sanctions for every leader and follower." [226] In this sense, Rida believes that Islam achieves the same outcome that secularists strive for by denying religious leaders the power to arbitrarily infringe upon the freedom of individuals or groups. In fact, as the following passage shows, Rida implies that Islam set an example of abolishing religious authority for the French Revolutionaries to follow:

> It is the right of the scholars, rational individuals, writers and speakers to state what they wish of Christian spiritual authority…. They have the right to say that were it not separated from civil authority, we would not have smelled the breath of freedom. They have the right to excuse the French nation, since it attempted to uproot this authority entirely. The Muslim excuses them in all of this, as it is the practice that Islam brought as we stated at the beginning of this article. Thus whoever did not derive it from Islam directly may derive it from the order of innate disposition, should knowledge guide him toward it. Islam is nothing but the religion of innate disposition, the guide to its order and God's laws for it.[227]

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[224] Ibid, 199.
[225] Ibid, 198-9.
[226] Ibid, 192.
[227] Ibid,192.

This once again reflects Rida's view that Islam is the pure source of reform as the religion of reason and innate disposition. In this way, the ideas that European thinkers arrived at through the use of reason do not challenge Islam but rather reflect the light of Islam. Similarly, the religion of innate disposition underpins Judaism and Christianity. For this reason Rida writes in defense of an ultimate religion, not only Islam, because "if the religion of innate disposition (*fitrah*) is not established, no religion may be established."[228] Within this one religion, Islam represents the final revelation but this "does not imply a diminution of Judaism and Christianity, as the existence of high schools does not diminish primary and secondary school, as both are necessary for it. The goal of all is one."[229] This understanding of the existence of a single, natural religion resembles Antun's argument that all religions share the same fundamental principles.

Both Rida and Antun believed that this oneness of religion should be the foundation of equality and tolerance. Antun, for example, wrote in *Ibn Rushd wa falsafatuhu* that the period of one group asserting that its religion is better than others passed with the middle ages, which were centuries of ignorance and intolerance, but "closeness [between religions] is now possible in this age of science and philosophy as long as every group respects the opinions and beliefs of others."[230] Similar to their views on freedom, Rida and Antun agree on the value of equality and tolerance but disagree on how they should be best protected. Antun, once again, believes that civil government,

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[228] Wood, 40.
[229] Rida, *The Criticisms of the Christians and the Proofs of Islam*, 189.
[230] Farah Antun, *Ibn Rushd wa Falsafatahu*, 50.

free from any religious bias, is the best guarantee of tolerance and equality.[231] Rida accepts the premise that the government is required to ensure equality, however, this "equality was not attained by a government, nor will be attained by a government, except when it raises Islam to its true form."[232]

Rida and Antun frequently discussed tolerance and equality within the context of religious freedom. So although these concepts are semantically distinct they are also components of the meaning of freedom. This is most visible in contexts where a lack of equality or tolerance is equated with a reduction in freedom. For instance, in an article comparing the treatment of Jews in France and Egypt, Rida argues that the unequal treatment of Jews in France contradicts and undermines the promises of French leaders, such as Bonaparte, to defend freedom. He contrasts this with the situation in Egypt, where Jews are treated equally because "we believe that universal freedom is not limited to any particular group."[233] Similarly, Rida reports with surprise and disdain that the government of England, despite its "rich history of freedom," did not allow Catholics to perform their religious traditions during Easter.[234] These examples demonstrated, in Rida's view, the lack of religious freedom in Europe, which he described as the "cradle of intolerance."[235] The East, on the other hand, and Muslims specifically, are more tolerant than Europe. Rida was proud to reprint an article from a Jewish journal stating

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[231] Hourani, 256.
[232] Rida, *The Criticisms of the Christians and the Proofs of Islam*, 201.
[233] *al-Manar* 1, no. 2 (1898),53-4.
[234] *al-Manar* 12, no. 6 (1909), 439.
[235] Ibid.

that "there is not a single country in Europe – in its entirety – where Jews enjoy the complete religious freedom that they have in the lands of the high [Ottoman] state."[236]

We have seen that Rida and Antun both embraced freedom as an important standard by which individual, group, and government behavior is judged. However, neither of these men believed that any one actor should have absolute freedom as this would inherently limit the freedom of others. Furthermore, Rida and Antun were concerned with building and maintaining the unity of their imagined communities – the Ottoman Empire and the Muslim *umma* respectively – and they both believed that the excessive exercise of freedom could threaten this unity. Antun, for instance, advocated respect for intellectual freedom and the freedom of the press as the foundation of reform, but he also warned against giving the press complete freedom as this would allow writers with sectarian interests to stoke religious tensions.[237]

This is not necessarily a contradiction in Antun's thought but represents his belief that freedom must be moderated. Antun described freedom as a force of repulsion that must be balanced by fraternity, the force of attraction in society. He argues that in the East – which contains so many different religious groups that naturally tend to separate – it is especially important to introduce this force of attraction into the body of the nation before introducing freedom in order to avoid causing chaos. Antun identifies three means of developing fraternity: first, mothers who teach the 'sons of the East' from a young age the meaning of patriotism (wataniyya); second, national schools where all the different elements of the nation receive the same mandatory education; and thirdly, newspapers to

[236] *al-Manar* 1, no. 27 (1898), 545-6.
[237] Reid, 48.

prepare leaders of the new generation to place the public good above the interests of any particular group. If these steps are taken and fraternity reigns then "the rising sun of the East will bring light instead of fire for the new shoots that are planted in the eastern, Ottoman garden."[238] Antun dedicated *Ibn Rushd wa falsafatuhu* to these "new shoots of the east" and warned of the importance of unity to their future:

> [T]hose men of sense in every community and every religion of the east who have seen the danger of mingling the world with religion in an age like ours, and have come to demand that their religion should be placed on one side in a sacred and honoured place, so that they will be able really to unite, and to flow with the tide of the new European civilization, in order to be able to compete with those who belong to it, for otherwise it will sweep them all away and make them the subjects of others.[239]

Similarly, the unity of the Muslim community was of the utmost importance to Rida and he believed that freedom must be partially restricted at times for this reason. Rida's attempt to balance freedom and unity are reflected in his response to an Iraqi poet, Jamil Sidqi al-Zahawi, who published an article in 1910 in which he denied the existence of God and generally criticized Islamic traditions, including daily prayer and fasting during Ramadan. Rida argued that al-Zahawi's views should not be protected under the rights of freedom of expression and that he should not be allowed to teach Islamic law as he had previously. However, Rida also insisted that al-Zahawi and other apostates should not be killed or in any way physically harmed.[240] The killing of a Muslim who apostatized could only be justified if that person was a direct danger to the Muslim

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[238] Antun, Farah. "al-Akha' wa al-Hurriyah." *al-Jami'ah al-Uthmaniyyah* 1, no. 3 (April 1899).
[239] Hourani, 254-5.
[240] Ryad, 89-90.

community.[241] In this way, Rida recognized the freedom of individuals to leave the faith, while rejecting the notion that religious freedom protects those who attack Islam and the Muslim community. Thus, Antun and Rida both recognized that the ideal of freedom, which they both embraced, must also be balanced with the practicalities of managing competing interests. However, on a spiritual level, Rida maintained that absolute freedom was indeed possible:

> Islam established worship of God alone, freedom within the framework of the shari'ah, equality among people in rights and obligations, and liberation of will and thought from every communal headman's authority and every spiritual leader's control. Accordingly, the Muslim is completely God's slave, completely free in relation to anything other than Him.[242]

The Arabic word *islam* means submission and the religion Islam refers to believers' submission to God. In Rida's view, it is through this act of submitting to God that a person gains complete freedom from all other powers. In this way, Rida is essentially stating that true freedom is Islam. This is similar to the efforts of his predecessors who linked modern concepts with traditional Islamic terms, yet instead of connecting freedom to a particular concept within Islam, he connects it to Islam itself.

CONCLUSION

In *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*, Albert Hourani warns that Muslim reformers, who seek to defend Islam against secularist critics by demonstrating the compatibility of Islam with modernity, run the risk of actually weakening the integrity

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[241] Rudolph Peters and Gert De Vries, "Apostasy in Islam," *Die Wlt de Islams*, New Series ser., 17, no. 1 (1976-1977): 21-2

[242] Rida, *The Criticisms of the Christians and the Proofs of Islam*, 195.

of the religion. In commenting specifically on the efforts of Rida's master, 'Abdu, to connect modern European ideas with traditional Islamic concepts, Hourani writes that this could open "the door to the flooding of Islamic doctrine and law by all the innovations of the modern world. He had intended to build a wall against secularism, he had in fact provided an easy bridge by which it could capture one position after another."[243]

This warning assumes that the concepts associated with modernity are also inherently connected to secularism. However, we have seen in this study that one such concept, freedom, was adopted and used with equal ease by both a secularist and an Islamist. Furthermore, there was no evidence that either Antun or Rida radically reshaped their respective worldviews or redefined the concept of freedom in order to harmonize the two. In fact, they both demonstrated strikingly similar understandings of freedom despite sometimes using this concept to make sharply opposing arguments. They agreed for example that protecting freedom requires the biased influence of religious authorities to be eliminated from government. They also agreed that religious freedom involves tolerance and equality among different religious groups. They both evoked complete freedom as an ideal, yet also cautioned that the freedom of individuals and groups must be limited to a degree in order to safeguard the freedom of others and the unity of a community. In conclusion, this demonstrates that the concept of freedom is not inherently linked to secularism nor does it require a fundamental reinterpretation in order to support other ideologies; it is a flexible, but semantically stable, concept.

[243] Hourani, 144.

Conclusion

I initially began researching the history of the concept of freedom in the fall of 2009. At the time I had no indication of how relevant the topic of this thesis would be to the events occurring in the Arab world at the time of its writing in the spring and summer of 2011. It has been fascinating to witness the prominent role that the concept of freedom has played in the chants, songs, signs, and graffiti of protesters in Libya, Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain, and many other countries across the region. It is clear that freedom remains just as important, if not more important, a political value and standard of judgment as it was at the end of the nineteenth century. In addition, the competition of various groups with differing political goals to claim the mantle of freedom also remains just as intense. Today secularists and Islamists repeat many of the same arguments that were made a century earlier in the pages of *al-Jami'ah* and *al-Manar*. As the competing visions of Rida and Antun discussed in the last chapter indicate, we should pause before assuming that the concept of freedom is inherently more compatible with or leads to any particular political ideology. Freedom is a flexible concept that can be adapted to different political arguments. At the same time, the semantic field of this concept remains largely stable. In this way, secularists and Islamists can present very different proposals of how to protect freedom without disagreeing on the fundamental meaning of the concept.

It has also been interesting to note the eagerness of some to explain the events of what has been called the Arab Spring as somehow the product or result of Western

influences, whether that be technologies, such as digital media, or President Barack Obama's 2009 speech to the Arab world. This is reminiscent of the claims that the concept of freedom, and modernity more generally, was bestowed upon the Arab world by the French occupying forces in Egypt or by Christian missionaries in Syria. This study has undermined the validity of such claims. We have seen that at the time of Napoleon Bonaparte's arrival in Egypt in 1798, Jabarti did not possess a word to identify the concept of freedom but he did possess the concept, which he used in his criticism of the occupation. Therefore, the concept of freedom existed in Arabic thought prior to the arrival of the French in Egypt and prior to Tahtawi's identification of the concept with the word *hurriyah*, which he semantically expanded to translate *liberté*. This is not to say that Western ideas had no impact on Arab intellectuals. Bustani's advocacy of *hurriyat al-damir*, or the freedom of conscience, reflects the influence of his missionary mentors. Yet Bustani's conception of freedom was also built upon the work of Tahtawi and other Arab writers in addition to the secularism of French writers, which the missionaries fundamentally opposed.

In conclusion, we have seen how the concept of freedom was used by three generations of Arab writers during the nineteenth century. Each writer framed the concept slightly differently depending on the political debates in which he was engaged at the time. Yet the core semantic field of the concept remained surprisingly constant. For example, the meaning of freedom for Rida, an Islamic modernist, was essentially the same as that of Antun who advocated secularism. Furthermore, the meaning of the concept was essentially the same for these 'modernist' and 'reformist' thinkers as it was for Jabarti, who supposedly represents traditionalism. In the introduction to this study,

we visited Albert Hourani's self-criticism that he may have overemphasized the 'modern element' in the first generations of Arab writers during the nineteenth century. He suggested that "it would have been possible to write about them in a way which emphasized continuity rather than a break with the past."[244] This close examination of the concept of freedom has indeed shown that there was considerably more continuity than change in the thought of Arab writers during the nineteenth century. However, the continuity that this study found in the concept of freedom, which is one of the pillars of modernity, should not lead to the conclusion that the "modern element" was smaller in the later generations but rather that it was greater in the earlier generations.

[244] Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*, Preface.

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